

# The Church TODAY and TOMORROW

by ROBERT J. THOMAS, D.D.

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# THE CHURCH Today and Tomorrow

David J. Wieand  
Editor

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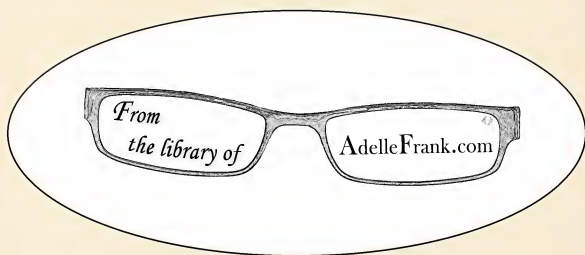
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## *Introduction*

This volume, *The Church Today and Tomorrow*, is composed of papers from Bethany faculty members. It may appropriately be called *Bethany Faculty Series Number One*. It is an effort to put into print the fruitage of some of the thinking and discussions of teachers of religion in our church seminary. Its primary purpose is to share with our ministers and laity the creative task of interpreting the teachings and the work of the church.

It is the hope of Bethany faculty members that this book is only the beginning. Continual study and research may bring forth other volumes. A theological seminary is more than a school for the education of young people for Christian service. It is a house of prayer, and a center for the interpretation of religion. It is a place for the gaining of prophetic insights. It is an altar where great commitments are made. These values should be shared with the brotherhood. *The Bethany Faculty Series*, though imperfect, is an effort toward this sharing. If these papers lead the readers to a greater devotion for Christ and the church, the purpose of the authors will be realized.

*Rufus D. Bowman*



## Chapter I

# *The Church*

Warren W. Slabaugh

### INTRODUCTION

There is a renewed interest in the study of theology today. Not many years ago sincere Christians were saying, "It makes little difference what you believe if only you live right." Particularly those who were enthusiasts for social reform were taking this position. They were not to be understood as belittling religious truths, but rather expressing their preference for practical Christianity, as over against what seemed to them to be abstract. But today the pendulum has swung back. This is in part due to the disappointment at the failure of schemes of social betterment to succeed. The last thirty years have been full of disillusionment; the hopes of bringing in a better age immediately have been ruthlessly swept away. Advanced ground, won through weary years of planning and toil, has been lost overnight. The Eighteenth Amendment was lost, the League of Nations was bowed off the stage, World War I has been followed by



a "global" war so terrible that no one can comprehend it. The veneer of civilization has been found to be thin indeed. Many are frankly discouraged, as though the church has failed; those who have the courage to go on are driven back upon themselves to inquire what the causes of the defeat are, and to seek new techniques. A growing conviction has come that there has not been a sufficient undergirding of spiritual power and vision to ensure progress. The necessity presses upon them to inquire into the religious backgrounds and the theological bases of the good life. Naturally in this renewed interest in theological study, the church has come in for its share of interest. For the church is an institution created by Christ to carry forward the gospel of the Kingdom.

This renewed interest in the doctrine of the church has been both the root and the fruitage of the Ecumenical Movement. It promoted the great meetings at Oxford and Edinburgh in 1938 and later at Madras. There have been set up study groups around the world who are studying the doctrine of the church, both as to *Faith and Order* and as to the *Ethical Function of the Church*.

Another factor is the precarious situation in which the church finds itself in many areas of the world. The rise of the totalitarian state has put the church in peril of persecution. The church is not honored by the state; it may count itself happy to be left in peace. Everywhere the church has lost prestige; in many of the mission fields the regular program of the church has been seriously dislocated and even brought to a halt by the war. Even in the most democratic countries, the church is no longer in

a place of influence where it may speak with authority on political or other social questions. It is a fact of great moment that not for fifteen hundred years has the church been held in such disrespect by the state and society at large. This has even led to questionings whether there is any future for the church at all.

### THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

The church has always, in principle at least, considered the church of the first century, A. D., its norm and example. It will be well therefore to review briefly the New Testament doctrine of the church as found in the teachings of Jesus and in the history of the apostolic church.

#### *Definition of Terms*

The word in the Greek text which is translated *church* is *ecclesia*; its meaning is *assembly*. The form of the word root, *to call out*, refers to the calling of the people to a meeting by a herald. There were two words in use in the first century which had practically the same meaning, *ecclesia* and *synagoge*. Both are found in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Jewish Scriptures. *Ecclesia* generally answers to the Hebrew word *Kahal* and *synagoge* to *Edah*. Both words in the Hebrew meant *congregation* and the only difference was that *Edah* was applied more especially to the empirical reality, while *Kahal* designated the ideal. There was certainly little difference between the two words and the usage was largely determined by the choice of the individual writer.

However, by the time of the first century the Jews had centered on *synagogue* to designate their assemblies, and the church, which early spread to the Gentile world, came to use the word commonly used by the Greeks for their assemblies. The word in this non-religious sense is found three times in the New Testament, namely Acts 19:32, 39, 41. Once the word *synagogue* is used of the Christian assembly, in James 2:2. While *church* refers to the ancient community of Israel in Acts 7:38, *ecclesia* in the New Testament may refer to the individual congregation as in Gal. 1:1, to the meeting of the group in the sense of "in church" (1 Cor. 14:19); it often refers to the Christian movement as a whole, either as a historical movement (Acts 12:1; Gal. 1:13), or as the ideal, the body of Christ, a spiritual entity (Eph. 1:22; 5:23).

### *The Beginning of the Church*

The church had its beginning in Christ. It is a commonly accepted statement that the church began formally at Pentecost in the outburst of spiritual power demonstrated in the speaking in tongues. From a dispensational viewpoint the claim is sometimes made that the church began in its fullest development as a universal movement at the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A. D., when the temple was destroyed and Judaism ceased as a nation. It may be argued on the other hand that the church is the true continuation of Judaism, being the fulfillment of its Scriptures and the climax of its revelation. In its general aspect as well as the local, there is much resemblance between Judaism and the Christian church.

But the church was founded by Christ; the church is unique in that it centers in him as the source of its inspiration and power. He was in the church and the church began with him; it did not need to wait until some future time after his death. On the other hand, it did not exist before him, though historically it is related to Judaism. In the study of the life and ministry of Christ, it is customary to divide his activities into two divisions: first, his relationship with God in the realm of prayer and devotion; Jesus was the greatest of mystics; his spiritual instinct made communion with God easy. Therefore he spent many hours apart from men with God. The second was his ministry to his people, to whom he went proclaiming the coming of the Kingdom. It was indeed a full ministry, and he gave himself to it with abandon.

But there was another part of his life, of no less importance than the first two; it stood between his devotion to God on the one hand and his devotion to a needy people on the other. It was his life within a close-knit fellowship which he began to create from the beginning of his ministry. He invited men to become learners in an itinerant school. Not only men were in the company; very early there were women as well (Luke 8:1-3). He chose certain men "that they might be with him" (Mark 3:14). The claims of this new fellowship transcended those of home and family (Mark 3:31-35). Those closest to him shared his solemn moments in the presence of God (Luke 9:28; Matt. 26:37). So deep were the impressions received that this fellowship did not break up at his death, though the disciples' faith and hopes were



wavering. They were still together when he arose, and in the conviction that he was living and spiritually present with them, the fellowship became a permanent institution. The importance of this early fellowship is shown by Jesus' appreciation of its values; there is a note of pathos in his words at the Last Supper when he said, "With desire I desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer," and there is a note of anticipation when he looks forward to the hour when they shall be reunited in the Kingdom of God. This fellowship which he created was the beginning of the Christian church—it was in itself the church. It had been created around a central figure who was the source of its inspiration and power.

### *The Centrality of Christ*

This became the pattern of the New Testament church. The visible presence of Christ had been exchanged for his spiritual presence. The Christian community was more than a voluntary association of like-minded people. It was a group of redeemed people devoted to their Lord. The record of his life and teachings was treasured by them and became their gospel, though in the beginning the story was not written.

It was a mystic union; they thought of him as more than a historical person—he was a living presence. Their relationship with him is described by Paul as being "in Christ." And he was more than a revelation of moral and religious truth; he was the source of spiritual life. Herein lies the uniqueness of the church; they had ac-

cepted the Jewish Scriptures as their own and regarded them as having been fulfilled in Christ and his church. But the church was more than a product of Judaism; "in Christ" it was a new creation. This truth is expressed by a New Testament writer when he said, "God, having of old time spoken to the fathers by the prophets, in fragments and in different ways, has in these latter days spoken to us in a Son" (Heb. 1:1). Christ is more than a prophet, or the full flowering of the prophetic line—he is the Son; from him flows a line of power to each member of his body. Thus there arose the phrase, "the Body of Christ," a favorite with Paul.

### *The Church a Fellowship*

The church was not an aggregation of isolated individuals, held in attraction to Christ, and insulated one from another. The magnetic power which held them to Christ in turn magnetized each individual and so they were attracted and bound together, each to the other. This mutual attraction depended on the power which was resident in Christ, but with him as the living center, the *Koinonia* or fellowship of the Spirit was bound to follow. When we attempt to describe the early church in terms of the modern church, it is remarkable for the things which it did not possess. There were no church houses; they must wait for later centuries to provide. They possessed no literature other than the Jewish Scriptures. It was twenty years before Paul wrote the first Thessalonian letter, the first book of the New Testament. They had little wealth, little culture, no political power.

There was no imposing hierarchy; the organization was very simple but in keeping with their democratic spirit.

But they had that without which the possession of all the appointments of the modern church would have been in vain—they had the sense of belonging to Christ and to one another. It was this magnetized fellowship which constituted the church. The earliest account tells that they continued in the apostles' teaching and the *fellowship* (Acts 2:42).

### *Love*

It was not an impersonal force which held them together. The principle which dominated their lives was love, *agape*, which is at the heart of the life and teachings of Jesus, and of his church. It expressed itself in their devotion and service to each other. In the Jerusalem church "all that believed were together and had all things common; and they sold their possessions and parted to all according as any man had need" (Acts 2:44-45). "And not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own. For neither was there any that suffered lack" (Acts 4:32, 34). Though their benevolence was not always in the form of community of goods, it was genuine and practical. The duty of helpfulness was always laid on the conscience of their leaders (James 2:14-26). Paul's churches sent gifts to their unknown brethren in Jerusalem. One of the most often repeated expressions on the part of their pagan neighbors was "Behold how these Christians love one another."

*Brotherhood Meetings*

The outstanding institution of the early church, and the most significant, was the brotherhood meeting or the Agape as it came to be called. This was a meeting for social fellowship and corporate worship. They ate a common meal together, lingering around the tables; this was the Lord's Supper. They read the Scriptures and chanted psalms, they exhorted and prayed and on some occasions their devotions took on something of ecstatic frenzy. They partook of the bread and the cup in memory of the death of their Lord. Their citizenship was in heaven; they had found a peace not based on physical security but on this sense of belonging together. The world out of which they had come was unfriendly, but by drawing close to their Lord and to one another they found comfort and assurance. The choice of the brotherhood meal was not by accident. The story of the Last Supper, the last of a long series of such occasions, had captured the imagination of the early disciples. The two disciples at Emmaus recognized the Lord in the familiar breaking of the bread.

*The Social Character of the Rites*

The rites of the early church were not without social significance. Baptism was the rite of entrance into the fellowship; they were baptized into Christ, and the Body of Christ was the church. "For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13). The Eucharist also carried the symbolism of their corporate unity. Paul said, "Seeing that we who are many are one loaf, one



body, for we all partake of the one loaf" (1 Cor. 10:17). It is true that the rites have other meanings symbolizing the individual's experience of salvation, but the corporate idea is of equal importance.

### *Separation From the World*

The early Christian communities became in reality secret societies. They were in the world but they were not of the world. They had come into a fellowship so unique in its spiritual qualities that the cleavage between them and those outside was apparent immediately. The quality of life which they possessed, expressed in such terms as "love," "peace that passeth understanding," and "joy in the Holy Spirit," was not in accord with the spirit of the world. This new exclusiveness was free from any element of prejudice; the separation came about as a result of the novel experiences into which they had entered.

The fact must not be overlooked that the early church was influenced by the Apocalyptic, that expectation that the end of the age was near. Daniel and Revelation are the two books of the Bible of this kind. At Thessalonica some believed that the Lord's coming was at hand; many believed that the event would take place in that generation. The ground of this belief lay in their Jewish background and in certain sayings of Jesus. Paul advised virgins not to marry because "the time is shortened." This helped to deepen the sense of detachment with which they viewed the world and society. Unsaved men were living for the present and the sensuous; Christians were already living in the Coming Age. Yet the Apocalyptic cannot

be made to explain all the peculiarities of the early church; it was the action of unseen spiritual forces which produced the apart-from-the-world community, rather than obsession by the Apocalyptic.

### *The Standard of Ethics*

It has been a commonly accepted article of faith on the part of the church through the centuries that it found its standard of ethics in the life and teachings of Jesus. This was eminently true of the early church. Jesus' ethic became valid and authoritative for them. This moral obligation to live like him was not regarded as a legalistic demand; rather, the good life came as a response to the grace of God in Christ. Thus Christ became their example and the source of their life. The Spirit of Christ in their midst was in its ethical implications clothed upon with the moral excellence of the historical Jesus. No consideration of prudence kept them from following him. Thus there was developed a corporate conscience, an agreement as to ethical behavior, the pattern of which was set by Christ. It was indeed a *Koinonia* of conduct.

It was in the essence of the fellowship that the group should exercise discipline over its members. Certain conditions were set upon entrance into the group. The close ties which bound them together brought moral pressure to bear on each member to conform to the pattern of conduct which they found in Christ. They even claimed the right to dismiss anyone who refused to yield to the moral demands imposed upon all. Jesus had said, "If thy brother sin [the best manuscripts omit *against thee*]

go convict him of his sin. . . . If he refuse to hear the church, let him be to thee as a Gentile and a publican" (Matt. 18:15-17).

## RELATION OF THE CHURCH TO THE WORLD

### *Evangelism*

Though the church had been called out of the world, it was not indifferent to the world. The church was intensely missionary. It is recorded that the early Christians "went everywhere preaching the Word," though they were fleeing for their lives. Saul of Tarsus believed he had a call to be the apostle of the Gentiles and in his short ministry planted churches as far west as Italy at least. The driving motive was, first, a desire to share their unique blessings with others and, second, to fulfill the obligation which Christ had laid upon them, namely to promote the Kingdom of God. When we take into account the opposition which early developed against this "illicit" religion, the repeated persecutions through three centuries, and the social opposition, their success must be regarded as remarkable. The power of God was working mightily through human agencies.

"Never in the history of the race has this record ever quite been equalled. Never in so short a time has any religious faith, or, for that matter, any other set of ideas, religious, political, or economic, without the aid of physical force or of social or cultural prestige, achieved so commanding a position in such an important culture."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Scott Latourette, *The First Five Centuries*, Harper & Brothers. Page 112.

*Effect on Society at Large*

Did the church have a program of social betterment, a scheme to raise the standards of society? The answer is in the negative; the early church did not assume the responsibility of saving society, nor did it feel that its own safety and permanence depended on the preservation of any particular social system. They did rejoice when they were permitted to live their lives in peace. But their philosophy seemed to have been to accept outside conditions as they were. Paul had a kindly attitude toward the state for he was a Roman citizen. The policy of religious toleration on the part of Rome had protected the infant church as long as it was regarded as a part of Judaism. Another great leader of the first century declared that Rome was the beast, which was destined to be destroyed. There was no concerted drive to abolish social evils like slavery—we look in vain into the words of Jesus and of his followers for such a program. True, they exercised the prophetic role of condemnation of evil, both individual and corporate, but they had no social gospel in the sense in which we think of it. They were insistent upon high moral standards for the group and they believed themselves to be lights in the world.

It is misleading, however, to declare that the church had no interest in the world other than to condemn it. They attempted to maintain the spirit of Christ, of compassion and concern for every human ill, and society was not unaffected by the church. The amelioration of slavery and in many cases emancipation by Christian masters must have tended to abolish some of its cruelties. It is



believed that through these centuries the influence of the church was making itself felt in refining the theater and the gladiatorial shows and in lifting the level of sex mores.

But the early church cherished no dreams of remaking the world and what reformation there was came as it were by accident, as a result of their living in the world. For the forces which worked for the uplift of society, like those by which they carried on their central purpose of evangelism, were the unseen forces of the spirit. It was the insistent compulsion of good lives in quietness, not insisting on their civic rights but meeting indifference and persecution with love, that overthrew paganism and made Christianity the dominant religion of the empire.

#### THE CHURCH OF TODAY

In bridging the gap between the early centuries and the twentieth, the pertinent question is, What form shall the church take today? Is the true church a creature of evolution, molded by a changing world, or does it find its norm in the church of the New Testament? Every branch of the Christian church claims to find its authority and its form in Christ and the apostolic church, and yet a casual study of church history reveals that great changes have taken place, not only in outward form but in spirit.

The change in status in the fourth century from that of a persecuted church to the church of the empire had far-reaching effects. This change affected particularly the constitution of the church as the Body of Christ, separated from the world, engaged in evangelism and reaching

toward the goal of the Kingdom of God in the future. As society became more and more Christian, nominally, the close-knit *Koinonia* of the Spirit was lost for a more diffused social relationship; the separation from the world ceased to exist as the world became Christian, nominally; and for the same reason, evangelism waned and the energies of the church were directed toward the enforcement of ethical demands by legalistic means, rather than through the spiritual transformation of life. The Kingdom came to be thought of as a present reality, not a perfect regime to be realized at the end of the age.

This transformation of the world by the church, by means of its enrollment in church membership, carrying also an assumption of churchly influence on the political powers, is referred to by later historians as the *Corpus Christianum*, or Christendom, as distinguished from the concept of the *Corpus Christi*, the Body of Christ. The church of the medieval period believed that it was the Kingdom of God, and that all of mankind belonged to it potentially; therefore it had the right to exercise power, direct or indirect, over all mankind in the present age. This *Corpus Christianum*, in outward form, has passed, though it is still the ideal of the Roman Catholic Church. But even in America many of its presuppositions still persist. It is a common assumption that Christian ideas have penetrated into society and the process of Christianization has gone on to the extent that our culture is largely Christian. What has really happened is that there has been an interpenetration of church and world, resulting in lowered standards of the church, and a consequent toleration

on the part of the church for the world. In losing its sense of separation, the church has lost the sense of the presence of the living Christ in its midst. This has affected adversely the worship and sacraments, the fellowship of the saints, the unique sense of spiritual power, the operation of the principle of love, *agape*; these have been lost to the degree that the standards of the world have been accepted by the church. It has resulted in a divided loyalty, to the church and to the world. Missionary zeal has waned from lack of exercise—only the heathen remain to be evangelized!

This acceptance of the world as something to be refined rather than to be redeemed has led to this assumption: the world of the so-called Christian nations is to be regarded as “an erring brother who needs only to be reminded of his duty”; by means of education and political action society may be redeemed.

### *Restoration of the Body of Christ Concept*

Through the centuries there have been dissenting groups within the church who endeavored to win the church back from its enamoration with worldly alliance to the pattern of the New Testament church. And it is that pattern which this paper is attempting to outline. With worldly voices either wooing or commanding the church, it is imperative to remember that the church can have but one Master, and one will to obey, that of God in Christ. The first thing of importance is to restore the spiritual reality of the Body of Christ. In this basic union alone can be found the vision and the dynamic to

fulfill its destiny. Therefore, the chief concern of the church today must be to renew the lines of power with its Head and to strengthen the fellowship of the saints, not to perfect political techniques or to seek an alliance with the world. This *Koinonia* of the Spirit must become a reality so intensive as to minister to the deepest spiritual need of every Christian and so extensive as to embrace the members of Christ's body around the world. Into this ecumenical fellowship will come the Christians of the so-called younger churches among the heathen, and the saints in those countries which the world calls enemy nations. *Agape* must be given its central place as the controlling principle of this fellowship.

In building up brotherhood, there must be given up that extreme individualism which is the enemy of fellowship. The individual, with his sense of God's grace upon him, will find his largest freedom in the fellowship of the church. There will also be created a corporate conscience, an accepted pattern of moral behavior, not of the world mistakenly called Christian, but of Christ. There will be a new joy in corporate worship, a comforting sense of the presence of others, a feeling of a flow of power in and through the group. And in the joy of this intimate face-to-face fellowship, the bonds of spiritual union with all believers will become a reality. Thus in drawing near unto the Lord and to one another, there will be ministered a sense of security in a dangerous world.

### *The Present Crisis*

The church needs to become aware that its position in



the world is not sure—it never was. But for centuries the church has felt secure in the sense of prestige and influence in the sight of the world. It comes, therefore, as a shock to discover that this favorable opinion on the part of the world has perceptibly diminished. In certain nations of Europe, once nominally Christian, suppression of the church has become a national policy. Even in the more friendly of the Western nations, the totalitarian tendency in government has challenged the independence of the church. The church can no longer lift an effective voice in matters of government as it could in the Middle Ages; the tendency is rather for the state to use the church as an instrument to advance its own interests. There is no nation today which can be called Christian, according to the pattern of the *Corpus Christianum*. The church can no longer maintain the fiction that it dominates the state. Pagan forces have successfully challenged its claims. The church is back where it was in the early centuries, without political power and prestige. And its loss is in reality gain; it is now free from an alliance which took away its freedom.

It is important, therefore, that the brotherhood be restored in the church. In the dark days ahead, when even the right of the church to exist may be challenged, the only salvation lies in drawing near to God and tightening the bonds of fellowship. Here only will be found the assurance and the strength which will enable the church to face persecution and to give answers to those who ask concerning the hope within. This refuge will be found, not by cultivating the friendship of the world, but

in him who is the Rock of Ages. But whether the days be dark or fair, the church can be itself only by maintaining the fellowship; without the fellowship there is only the outer shell of the church without life and power. But in the true church, the *Koinonia* of the Spirit, the first fruits of the promised Kingdom of God are realized.

The disasters which have befallen the world, in the last thirty years especially, should teach the church one important lesson; namely, the world needs something more than the political and economic panaceas in which so much faith has been placed. Without the change of the heart of man through the gospel of Christ, there can be no hope of peace and security in the world. With a renewed appreciation of the blessings of the church in Christ, the flame of evangelistic zeal will be rekindled. An enthusiasm must again possess the church, like that of the early Christians who went everywhere preaching the Word. There must be a revival of zeal, such as possessed the modern foreign missionary movement, but even more inclusive in scope, and with a more sober and objective estimate of the magnitude of the task. The first great work of the church is evangelism. The church has blessings to share with a lost world. There is the Great Commission, "Make disciples of all nations," and the promise of power from the Lord. The church may need to curtail certain activities; buildings cannot be built because of priorities. But the plans to enter open fields must go on apace. It will not be poverty or persecution or world conditions which will hinder the church; the forces of defeat come from within.

*The Responsibility of the Church to Refine Society*

Does the church have a responsibility for the world other than to bring it the gospel of salvation? Surely in so far as the church is successful in evangelism, it has given to men its greatest gift. But does the plan of God for the church contemplate a service other than the spiritual task of conversion? Has the church a concern for the ethical behavior of the world? Is it the duty of the church to work for political or economic changes in society? Has the church any stake in contemporary society and are the fortunes of the church tied up in any way with the fortunes of the world? For instance, in this country it may be asked, "Will not the church fail if democracy fails?"

*The Interest of the Church for Society*

God offers all his gifts to men, though they may not accept them all. Surely the concern of the church must embrace all the needs of men. But the first concern is for men's spiritual salvation, their restoration to God's favor. But there is an all-embracing compassion, inherent in Christianity, for men in the grip of evil, be it sin or any other woe which befalls mankind, sickness or poverty or oppression. The Christian is exhorted to be patient under his own affliction, but he must be concerned about the troubles of others, whether they be undeserved or deserved. Jesus taught that his disciples should be the salt of the earth, the light of the world. Their reaction to the wrongs suffered by others is to right them and to alleviate sufferings, wherever they exist. Jesus commanded to pray that the will of God be done on earth as in heaven.

Though Jesus likely was referring to the end of the age, the knowledge of this fact does not annul the instinctive desire for immediate relief. There is a practical aspect of the problem as well. The moral welfare of the Christian may be seriously affected by his environment; therefore, the social heritage, particularly of the young, may be an important factor in the decision of his destiny. The forces of sin in the world make difficult the decision to become a Christian, or, the decision having been made, to live uprightly. Every sincere Christian will pray, "Lead us not into temptation," and will desire a better society where moral dangers are fewer.

### *Basic Considerations*

It is well to remember that Jesus made a distinction between men and institutions. His love and concern flowed freely to men in need. He healed the sick, he fed the hungry, he expressed compassion for the poor and the sorrowing. Like God he offered all his gifts to men. He did not limit his healings to those who promised to join his church. Yet he was sorely disappointed when men came to him for cures and slighted his gospel. His passion was to bring men out of the bondage of sin into sonship with God. "Seek ye first his Kingdom and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." But he did not expect to save the whole world. There were two ways, one strait and narrow and few would enter it. The Hebrew prophets had to be satisfied with the Remnant. Notwithstanding the yearning love of God and his power, and the latent possibilities



within the human spirit, Jesus did not underestimate the power of sin which held the world in its grip. He was not able to save his nation from a fatal war with Rome; he believed that he possessed a way of life which, if they had accepted it, would have saved the nation and city from destruction. Though his failure brought agony of spirit and took him to the cross, he did not despair that he had missed the will of God. It was not for him to marshall forces merely to win a victory; he must do God's will, whatever the cost. And though, following that will, he came to the cross, he did not die in despair. For he had not failed, though he had failed in doing what human reason would judge as of immediate importance. Human reason would also have dictated methods to gain the ends desired, other than the spiritual methods he used. Saving the nation, however, was secondary to the main purpose, namely, to bring men into the favor of God and in a fellowship which he called the *ecclesia*. For his fellow Jews were more than politically oppressed; they were oppressed by sin.

And the church has not failed, though ancient evils have not been banished. Had the church been more faithful to its basic tasks, the work of moral reform would have gone farther, but the success of the church in the final analysis does not demand the complete refinement of human society.

The church must get rid of the fallacy which grew up through the days of the *Corpus Christianum* that its destiny is tied up inevitably and fully with any given social or political system, however good it may be. Other-

wise the church will find itself defending systems which, because they are of human institution, fall short of the divine standards which the church possesses in Christ. And there may follow two other evils: the church will be tempted to use the weapons of the world in this defense, and, secondly, its own standards will tend to drop to the level of the imperfect. The church must not fall into a panic when a civilization seems to be falling—it lived through the fall of the Roman Empire. Here the Apocalyptic hope has a contribution, in that it can minister to the church a sense of independence with respect to the world, and a sense of serenity when all is in confusion. The church is builded on spiritual foundations and its fortunes are not, in the final analysis, tied up with those of any human institution.

### *The Program of Social Reform*

What shall the church do then? Has such a program any place? The answer is "Yes." But the church must, like Christ, make a distinction between individuals and systems. Its responsibility to individuals is more immediate. The Spirit of Jesus in the church is a spirit of compassion and helpfulness toward all who are in distress. "Do good unto all men. . . . If thine enemy hunger, feed him" were the words of Paul. Jesus declared that men would be judged in the Day of Judgment upon the record of their treatment of others. The church has ever been in the vanguard of programs of mercy; it has fed the hungry and clothed the naked, it has builded hospitals and asylums, and it has poured out its resources to

help the needy around the world. And all this it has done with no thought of glory or recompense. And the church must lead the way in relieving the desperate conditions of the present. It must give the lie to the argument that starving people or feeding them is a proper weapon to win a war. It is not the will of the Father that a little child anywhere should perish of hunger.

And yet, charity is not the first work of the church, important as it is. "Man shall not live by bread alone." Jesus was tempted to found his Kingdom on bread but refused. It is not enough to feed men's bodies; it may be necessary in times of emergency to give relief programs the right of way. But in the long-range program, evangelism must be central; any continued program of relief must contemplate the creation of the face-to-face fellowship of the church. Relief can best be administered as an integral part of evangelism.

### *Relation to Institutions*

The church is not another institution; it is a spiritual organism related to a living Lord. But the church is in the world though it is not of the world. The church is the church of history, and cannot be thought of apart from its historical setting. It has therefore a part in determining the course of history for good. There is, first, the prophetic function of the church; it must preach to all men. Sin must be condemned and righteousness exalted. God will judge the world according to this gospel in the Day of the Lord. The church has this deposit of spiritual and ethical truth from God through Christ, and

is able to point out the moral weaknesses of institutions and systems. Reference to sin is not reserved for pagan nations; there is much that is pagan in the so-called Christian culture. The church must courageously condemn evil, in low and in high places, even at the cost of enmity and persecution. It is not spiritual snobbery on the part of the church to dare to do this; it is true that it shares the corporate sin of the world and must ever be in the spirit of contrition. But it does possess a superior ethic, based on spirit and love, *pneuma* and *agape*, and to fail to convict the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment is to profess that the world has been Christianized to the extent that the margin of difference between church and world has vanished.

### *The Techniques*

The church must learn anew the methods of its Lord. He saw as none ever saw that the forces potent to destroy evil were the unseen forces of the spirit. The church must not fall into the error of using wrong means for a good end. Jesus was tempted to use violent force to promote the Kingdom of God, but he steadfastly set his face against these temptations through forty days. The end does not justify the means; in fact, the means which seems to be most potent may be impotent to secure ethical ends. Peace cannot be promoted by war and violence; the sowing must be of the kind of the desired harvest. The law of causality has not been repealed. It requires the vision of Christ to know this assuredly. Pious lives, lived in humility and service, rendering good for evil,



are more powerful than outward, physical forces. The church is tempted to become a political power, to use the weapons of the world. It is hard to believe, in a materialistic world, that it is "not by might nor by power but by my Spirit." The power of the church to transform society lies in its testimony of the truth, in lives quietly lived before God, in positive service to all men, in innocent suffering if need be. It will take the long look of Christ on the cross to believe this. Human nature is impatient for results. The Jews of Jesus' time were putting their faith in the Apocalyptic powers, or in the swords of the Zealots; we today hope to achieve immediate results by political action, or even more drastic weapons. The seed sown in the soil grows, man knows not how; for the earth bears its fruits quietly, and the process cannot be hastened, either by words or dynamite. The Kingdom also grows by unseen spiritual forces.

#### *Relation of the Church to Schemes of Social Betterment*

The slogan of the ecumenical church is "Let the church be the church." By this is meant that the church is unique. It cannot therefore make alliance with any political, economic or social movement, however good it may be; to give formal approval to any scheme would seem to lower the divine standards of the church to human levels, and might put the church in the embarrassing position of being compelled to defend the imperfect. But in preaching the truth, it will measure such schemes by the perfect standard, commending the good and pointing out the weaknesses.

The church must instruct the individual Christians as members of the body, and also as members of society. For Christians are citizens of the world, though their "citizenship is in heaven." The church must prepare its members to take their places in the world as redeemed men and women, bearing their testimony of righteousness. Their lives have meaning, not because of their membership in the world, but because of the church. As citizens they do not cease to be members of the Body. They are set in families; they have a part in business, in school and in state. In these relationships their lives have a redeeming quality. They may take part in any movement which commends itself to their enlightened conscience. Officially there is a place for extraecclesiastical organizations, created for the purpose of conserving human values and of banishing prevalent ills. Of these the Red Cross is an example. In so far as these movements are influenced by the ethical ideals of Christ as taught by the church, and are free from selfish motives, they are proper channels through which Christians may work at social problems.

What then is the place of the social gospel? Is it not a question of techniques rather than of right? It is a part of the work of the church, implicit in the words and acts of the Lord. It follows the building of the fellowship and evangelism. Any endeavor which promotes righteousness and banishes evil is a part of the Kingdom program. But the social gospel cannot be a substitute for fellowship and evangelism. It succeeds best when the fellowship is closest and evangelism is most determined;

it fails when it attempts to stand alone, or when it uses methods other than those prescribed by Christ. There never was in the history of the church such an opportunity to remake the world as in the days following Constantine and Theodosius; more and more the political power fell into the hands of the church. It believed that the Kingdom of God had come in the historical church. It was in a position to enforce Christian ethics. And yet the attempt failed, not because their motives were evil, but because they were mistaken. The people were becoming Christian by law, or force, as in the case of Charlemagne and the Saxons, and not by the spiritual means of regeneration. The distinctive brotherhood was lost, evangelism was emasculated, and the movement to Christianize the Western world failed through its lack of power—note the paradox!

As stated in the introduction of this chapter, there has come within the last thirty years a disillusionment because of the collapse of many schemes for social betterment. However, it needs to be remembered that the hopes of a better world are valid, but they must be builded on surer foundations. During the period around the turn of the century when the social gospel was in its ascendancy, particularly in America, there was a tendency to cleavage in historical Christianity. Liberal Christianity which sponsored the social gospel seemed to stand in opposition to the older staid type. There grew up a theology of the social gospel, which was not a theology, for the tendency was to slight theology. There was further a neglect of worship and the sacraments, there was a stress

on work as against attitudes, on the inherent ability of man to lift himself as against the enabling grace of God, and a frank disavowal of the mystic and other-worldly.

The foundations of the church of today must be those laid by Christ himself—faith, worship, the sacraments, the *Koinonia* of the Spirit, *agape*, spiritual power. These are the foundation stones of the church. Without them, there can be no church.

## Chapter II

### *The Church of the Brethren and the State*

Rufus D. Bowman

The problem of church and state is the major problem facing the churches in this generation. It has been a crucial problem for the Christian church since New Testament times. And in this age of power culture with the emergence and development of the totalitarian nation state, the very soul of the church is in danger.

#### THE CENTRAL PROBLEM

The central problem is that the Christian who desires to be a loyal citizen and also faithful to the teachings of Christ faces a dilemma. There is often a conflict between the teachings of Christ and the demands of the state. Especially is this true when a developing "totalitarian state" is claiming the right to exercise complete control over man. Should the Christian give absolute obedience to the state, or should he obey the will of God at any cost? In times of war, should the Christian sub-



mit to military conscription, or should he follow the teachings of Jesus at the price of suffering? This is the dilemma of the Christian.

The problem facing the church is just as serious as that of the Christian. Up until the time of Constantine Christians in the early church were prevailingly pacifist. There was a clear-cut separation of church and state, and Christians regarded themselves as citizens of heaven. Christians felt also that they were giving spiritual reality to the Roman society. But with the conversion of Constantine in 313 A.D., a marked change came in the character of the Christian church. Christianity became the legal religion of the empire. A close relationship between church and state followed. In the course of time the church gave up its nonresistant frontier. Christians in large numbers accepted military service. Leaders of the church attempted to harmonize the Christian ethic with warfare, as is found in the writings of St. Ambrose. St. Augustine developed the "just war" theory, explaining the "just war" in terms of a war to maintain justice and peace.

The "just war" theory during the Middle Ages was changed into that of the "holy war." The call to arms during the Crusades came from the church, not the civil ruler. Soldiers took up their swords as members of the church in what they thought were holy enterprises. They were to rescue holy places from the Moslems.

These two theories of warfare persisted until World War I when the "war to end war" theory was developed. World War I took on the character of a crusade both just

and holy. The war was fought in order to build a new order of society and to make the world safe for democracy. Churches responded to the lofty appeals of Woodrow Wilson.

Strong disillusionments followed the Treaty of Versailles. The new order of society did not come. Instead of realizing a world safe for democracy, there came the destruction of democracies. Instead of eliminating war, the seeds of a still more destructive war were sown. Many people began to see the moral law of God that ends and means are vitally related, that goodness as an end comes only through righteous means, that the Kingdom of God in human hearts never comes through the doing of evil, and that war which is contrary to the spirit and teachings of Jesus never has and never will become an instrument of salvation to men and nations. The "just and holy war" theories were exploded forever.

World War II developed another theory of war. The Christian Century called this war the "Unnecessary Necessity." It has not been called a holy war. The American people had no taste for it and not much enthusiasm. Millions of Americans felt that this war was evil but that the only thing to do was to jump in and get it over as soon as possible. The churches as a whole endorsed this war upon the basis that a victory for the Allies would make possible world conditions more favorable for the reception of Christianity.

The disillusionments of World War II are already coming. The fruitage of this war may be summarized as follows:

1. The atomic bomb, which has thrust fear into the hearts of all peoples on the earth.

2. The unsatisfactory policing of badly starved Europe.

3. A United Nations organization resting upon the domination of the weak by the strong.

4. The United States and Russia as two great rival world powers.

5. The conservation of imperialism instead of resolving it.

6. The pressure for universal military training to protect our country from the threat of war created by World War II.

7. A further militarizing of the United States.

8. A further weakening of the moral character of millions of people all over the world through the effects of the war.

9. The increase of hate.

10. The death of millions, separation of families, mass slaughter of civilians, untold suffering, and the starvation of women and children.

Isn't it time for the peoples of the world to say that they are through with war?

The Christian church, however, which should lead out in stopping war, is facing a dilemma. It has endorsed every war from Constantine until now. It has preached the Christian ethic but has compromised this ethic in times of strain. The Christian church endorsed World War II thinking that the outcome would be more favorable for the Christian message. But the outcome is the creation of instruments of death powerful enough to com-



mit world suicide. The hands of the church are red with blood. Christians on both sides fought against Christians. The church bowed to the state. The framing of the future pattern of our world is too largely in the hands of the politicians and the military for us to be comfortable. A Christian church weakened through compromise faces a lost and suffering world being refashioned by statesmen and generals. The message of Christ to the church is "Repent ye! Repent ye!" Only through repentance will the church regain its power and become God's effective instrument of salvation for the lost peoples of the world.

The Christian faces a conflict between loyalty to Christ and the claims of the state. The serious problem of the Christian church is that it has dimmed its testimony for peace through compromises with the state. *The central problem of the historic peace churches is that of maintaining their historic peace convictions and their historic witness against war in a period when the state is exercising more and more control over life.*

Even though the peace churches are officially pacifist and most of the outstanding church leaders and a strong minority of the church members hold firmly to the historic peace position, yet thousands of members during the recent war accepted military conscription and compromised with the war system. A careful study by the writer showed that a majority of the members of the Church of the Brethren were influenced by war propaganda and supported World War II. There is a question as to how far the peace churches will support a complete refusal to obey the voice of the state.

Still another phase of the problem is in regard to the administration of civilian public service. The theory of civilian public service is that of co-operation with the government in working out mutual problems. It involves dealing with the government upon the basis of goodwill and cultivation of understanding, but with the right of protest and nonco-operation always open. In working out the program of civilian public service for objectors to war, the directors of camps, chosen by the churches, had to act in a dual capacity. They were the agents of the churches directing the men during nonworking hours, and also the agents of Selective Service to enforce regulations regarding leave, furlough, and working hours. Because of this relationship to the government the peace churches have been criticized as being involved in administering the program of a conscripting state. The fact of compromise cannot be denied. But it has been intelligent compromise. The right of protest was often exercised. The peace churches often won great concessions in their struggles with the government. The Church of the Brethren opposed the coming of conscription but felt, after it came, that a greater peace testimony could be given through creative service to the nation rather than refusing all service. Brethren people think that in civilian public service the church went to the aid of young men caught by conscription and worked out the best program that could be obtained under the circumstances. Civilian public service is a gain over the consideration of conscientious objectors in World War I. One of the most constructive things coming out of World

War II is the record of those who refused to fight. Young men working to conserve our forests and farm lands, serving in fire-fighting units, serving in hospitals and showing kindness to those sick in body and mind, subjecting their bodies to medical experts as guinea pigs that the world may have greater knowledge of diets and diseases, have given a testimony that will live through the ages. While any future civilian public service program should eliminate the present element of compromise and save the directors of civilian public service units from functioning as agents of the government, yet it should not be forgotten that the present system has made it possible for thousands of those opposed to war to make a strong and constructive witness for peace.

#### THE NEW TESTAMENT ANSWER

The Christian in his conflict between loyalty to Christ and the demands of the state should turn first to the New Testament. What light does Jesus give upon this problem? The Master adopted many of the terms of Jewish nationalism. Yet he did not follow this pattern. He followed a course all his own. His purpose was to do the will of God. His mission was to redeem men. He established the church to carry on his work in the world. The Master showed that his Kingdom was not of this world, not in accordance with the nationalistic pattern. He chose the role of the servant. He saw the nations as potential persecutors of the church. Whether the state was friendly or not was not the chief concern of Jesus. His main interest was the Kingdom.

Jesus continually faced a war situation, yet he refused to compromise with the Roman government, repudiated their methods of violence, and taught love of enemies. The incident of Jesus and the tribute money (Mark 12:13-17) is neither a proof text in support of war nor does it prove that the Christian should yield unquestioned obedience to the state. The Pharisees were trying to trap Jesus by getting him into trouble, either with his own people by advocating submission to Rome or with the government by advocating resistance. Jesus said, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." In reality Jesus said that his followers should give to Caesar what belonged to him, but that they were obligated to fulfill their responsibilities to God. This scripture claims no obedience to the state contrary to the will of God. Devotion to the will of God is central in the teachings of Jesus.

The outstanding scripture used as a basis for a militaristic theology is Romans 13. In this chapter Paul says, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." Does this mean that all governments and all rulers are ordained of God? If it does, God is involved in the endorsement of evil. Alexander Mack faced this question and solved it by saying that governments are ordained of God, "if they will fulfill their office according to the will of God." Elder James Quinter helped to interpret this question for the Brethren by saying that the principle of civil government is ordained of God but whether any particular government is approved



of God depends upon the character of that government.

Paul was a Roman citizen and he could not quite get away from it. Rome had been the friend of the church. Religious toleration had been practiced by the Roman government. Christianity at the time of Paul's writing was regarded as a part of Judaism. The cruel persecutions under Nero had not yet begun. Paul felt that civil government was necessary and was ordained of God. It was only a few years until severe persecutions of Christians began and the followers of Christ had to reverse their judgment. John of Ephesus pictured the Roman Empire as the beast. Caesar-worship was common and one of the charges brought against the Christians was that they would not worship the emperor. Through the years of persecution the church saw the state as a human institution for the age and in no sense divine. Its weapons were those of material force. The great apostle himself died at Rome under Nero.

The Christian should also realize that it was the Apostle Paul who taught, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." Considering the circumstances under which Paul wrote, his desire to bring about peaceful relations between the Christian community and the state, his willingness to die rather than endorse Caesar-worship when the state and the church came into open conflict, one sees that obedience to the will of God was likewise central in Paul's mind and heart. It is consistent with a total view of Paul's teachings to interpret Romans 13 as holding that the fact of and the necessity for civil government are ordained of God, but whether any particular

government has God's endorsement depends upon the obedience of that government to God's will.

Peter also has a word to say about this problem. In 1 Peter 2:13-17 the apostle is telling the Christians to respect and obey human authorities, informing them that Christian freedom is not license to throw away human law, that living orderly lives will silence slander, and that they are to render to everyone the marks of respect. Peter wrote in a time when petty persecutions could easily break out. He laid down general principles and in no way implied complete obedience to the state. He was telling the Christians to prove by their lives that the things which were being said about them were not true. This same apostle said in Acts 2:29 that "we ought to obey God rather than men."

The New Testament holds that the Christian has a responsibility to the state but that in conflict situations the lordship of Jesus Christ is above all other loyalties.

#### THE ANSWER OF THE HISTORIC PEACE CHURCHES

What has been the position of the historic peace churches through the years regarding the relationship of church and state? The sixteenth-century Anabaptists, later called Mennonites, believed in the New Testament doctrine of nonresistance and held that the church should be a holy brotherhood separate from the state. The following statement from Guy F. Hershberger gives the Mennonite position:

This loss of nonresistance through the union of the

church and state is one reason why the sixteenth century Anabaptists, who later came to be called Mennonites, from the beginning of their history believed in a voluntary church, separated from the state. They believed that the Christian must be obedient to the New Testament doctrine of nonresistance. They believed that the church should be a holy brotherhood, separate from the state. Individuals who experienced conversion were welcomed into the holy society. But the Anabaptists did not attempt to control the unregenerate society of the world through their church in the manner that Calvin did. Nor did they permit the state in any way to interfere with the affairs of the church. They believed that the unregenerate world was not capable of living a nonresistant life. To have the church and the state united in any way, they believed, would mean the loss of the principle of nonresistance by the church. Therefore the Anabaptists rejected compromise and saved the principle of nonresistance by maintaining a strict separation of the church and state.<sup>1</sup>

The early Mennonites did not vote. They felt that voting would involve them in the support of war. They took no part in the affairs of government. Many Mennonites today are governed according to these principles. They live as guests in a country.

The Quakers, who came into existence in the seventeenth century in England, like the Mennonites did not believe that the state should direct the affairs of the church. But unlike the Mennonites they held that the members of the church should play an active part in the affairs of the state, and influence the state to adopt the peaceful ways of the church. The Friends have regarded

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<sup>1</sup> Guy F. Hershberger, *War, Peace, and Nonresistance*, The Herald Press, Scottsdale, Pennsylvania. Pages 189-190.

the state as a part of the world which needs to be redeemed. They have therefore been very active and often influential in the affairs of government.

The eighteenth-century Brethren started out with the Mennonites' position regarding church and state but moved through the years nearer to the Quaker position. The Brethren recognize their obligation to the state and want to be constructive citizens. At the same time they recognize that there is a higher authority than the state which the Christian should obey. This higher authority is the will of God as expressed in the New Testament and centered in the ethics of Jesus. The Brethren as a whole believe in voting and in expressing their convictions to government officials. Individual church members are urged to exercise their influence in behalf of better government. But the principle of the separation of church and state is strongly held. The Brethren in co-operating with the state in civilian public service did not give up this principle. They reserved and exercised the right to say to the state, "This far, and no farther." In fact, Brethren participation in the affairs of the state may be characterized as that of limited citizenship. The degree of our citizenship will depend upon the kind of government that is in power. The more righteous the government becomes, the more complete can be our citizenship. The more unrighteous the government becomes, the more limited our citizenship. Brethren are creative citizens. They believe in working with the government in solving mutual problems. But they hold that when the government's acts violate Jesus' teachings, God's will must be obeyed.



## FIELDS OF OPERATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

The church of the New Testament was founded by Christ to carry on his work. It was not political in character. It was the Body of Christ, the fellowship of believers with Christ as the head. It was entirely unique, resting upon the spirit and teachings of Christ. The Roman Empire belonged to that age, but the church was other-worldly. It was divine in purpose and mission.

The state of the twentieth century belongs to this age, but the church is different. The church is permanent. It is permanent because it is spiritual. It is timeless because of its mission as the instrument of God for man's redemption. Its future does not depend upon changing states and empires.

Conflicts are bound to arise between the church and the state. Both are institutions which wield authority and demand allegiance. From the human standpoint the state is in control. It has the power of life and death over its citizens. It has tremendous resources. It has armies at its command. The church is not a rival state. The church has only moral and spiritual forces. The church must view the state as belonging to the world and in need of redemption. The church should uphold ethical ideals and pass judgments upon the acts of the state. The church should not identify itself with any form of government because governments are imperfect. The Christian is a follower of Christ first and a citizen second.

The fields of operation of the United States government are defined by the Constitution as follows: to establish justice; to insure domestic tranquillity; to provide for

the common defense; to promote the general welfare; to secure blessings of liberty.

According to the Bill of Rights, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances." Thus, the Constitution guarantees freedom of religion to its people.

The function of the church may be defined as that of God's instrument working for the redemption of individuals and the bringing of Christian ideals into community life and society at large. The church in its efforts to Christianize individuals is interested in all of life. The church is interested in freedom of worship, freedom to think, and education for abundant living. The church does not deal directly with politics, but is interested in good government, for it sees how much the character of government influences the ideals of the nation. Therefore, the church educates for good citizenship and sometimes unofficially encourages strong Christians to run for public office. The Christian church in America accepts the position of the separation of church and state, but moves forward upon the assumption that the church is responsible for influencing the Christian in all areas of experience.

In these respective fields of endeavor conflicts arise at certain points. First, in regard to religious liberty. Freedom to worship has been granted but religious liberty has never been fully applied in the realm of a Christian

conscience against participation in war. If the Bill of Rights were truly expressed in American life, those whose consciences forbade participation in war would be wholly exempted.

The second conflict is in regard to education. Both the church and the state are interested in education. The church believes in educating persons for the highest moral and spiritual development and for Christian service. The state conceives its responsibility in terms of educating for democracy. But educating for democracy involves democratic means. Democratic means include free thinking, respect for persons, trust of the common man, the dissemination of accurate information to the people, open discussions and the weighing of values, and the providing of democratic methods for the people to express their convictions. Propaganda carried on by the government in order to lead people to preconceived ends, often withholding facts which the people should have, is not true democracy. Propaganda by the government in behalf of universal military training with the object of militarizing the minds of our youth is not true democracy. Democracy means the presentation of issues and helping the people to weigh the values concerned. The church has much at stake in this conflict, for the government has a particular type of man in mind in its educational program—a military-minded man, a man who will give complete obedience to the totalitarian demands of the government.

The third conflict is the contest between the church and the state for the absolute allegiance of man. Na-

tionalism has almost attained the status of a new religion. The American state has gone far beyond its large functions of establishing justice, insuring peace, providing for the common defense, and guaranteeing liberty. It is regulating more of our living and exercising more control over our culture. Democracy demands a free culture for existence. Freedom of religion makes imperative a free culture. The task of the church in a state-dominated culture is extremely difficult.

We already gave the central problem, whether the Christian should accept the lordship of Christ or obey the voice of the state. This central problem is made more complex by the fact that religious freedom guaranteed under the Constitution has never completely been applied to participation in war, that the state is educating its citizens with the object of producing a military mind, and that freedom of religion demands a free culture. The state is exercising more and more control over our culture.

#### PERTINENT PROBLEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. How far will the peace churches be united within their own membership on fundamental peace convictions? Will the fact that the majority of the members of the Church of the Brethren supported World War II have any bearing on future church-and-state relationships? Or can the peace leadership of the church educate the membership to accept our historic peace ideals?

2. How can the Church of the Brethren conserve its peace ideals in a time of increasing government control over life? Does the future call for parochial schools, the



building of Brethren communities, a stronger church fellowship, and a greater peace-education program? Should peace education become a major emphasis of our church? It is the conviction of the writer that if the Church of the Brethren is to continue its peace witness in the world, a strong peace-education program is necessary.

3. Is the present pattern of civilian public service a sound basis for future church-and-state relationships, or should improvements be made? In accordance with the Bill of Rights would the following be an acceptable outline of work for conscientious objectors: noncombatant service (for objectors who desire service within the military system); government projects of a civilian nature; church projects under complete church control; choice of individual projects by pacifists; complete exemption for absolutists? A program like this would eliminate the weaknesses which were inherent in civilian public service during World War II and establish the principle of voluntary choice for objectors to war.

4. How far can the Christian pacifist participate in the affairs of the government without compromise? Is it possible that circumstances may develop wherein the Christian pacifist could not conscientiously hold office or even vote? The answer is "Yes." The more Christian principles dominate the affairs of government the more completely can the Christian exercise his citizenship.

5. Since the Christian is to obey the will of God rather than of the state, where can the will of God be found? If the will of God is found in the Scriptures, who inter-

prets this will of God to the Christian, the individual himself or the church? Historic Brethrenism claims that the will of God is found in the Scriptures and centers in the life and the teachings of Jesus, and that when individuals differ in their interpretations of the teachings of Jesus, the authoritative interpretation must come from the church.

6. Since modern life is pagan, can the members of the Church of the Brethren make a more lasting contribution toward the Kingdom by withdrawing from participation in government and building Christian communities for the protecting of our young people, or by carrying on a world-wide program of evangelism and goodwill and thereby expressing the ideals of the church in sacrificial service?

Our fathers came to this country for religious freedom. When the "Oath Law" was passed, thousands of Brethren left Pennsylvania and moved into other states. Historically the Brethren solved difficult problems with the state through emigration. But the situation has changed. Brethren people participate in community life and in the affairs of the state. Individual members through constructive ways should exercise their influence toward good government. The Church of the Brethren should teach its historic ideals to its members and express these ideals through a world-wide program of evangelism and Christian service. And if the state refuses to recognize the Christian convictions of those who will not participate in war or military training, Christians must suffer for their faith. The future pathway of the Church of the Breth-

ren in dealing with the state has these possibilities: it can co-operate with the state in solving mutual problems as long as this works, but if this method should become no longer fruitful, the church must either compromise its principles or suffer for its faith. A peace-minded church, then, in a militarized nation may live under the shadow of suffering.

## Chapter III

# *The Understanding of the Unconscious and the Ministrations of the Church*

Jesse H. Ziegler

It has been widely suggested that the age in which we are living should be called the Atomic Age. It is devoutly to be hoped that the terrifying power wrapped up in the atom may be turned to the doing of the work of the world. Whether its power is turned into creative and healing channels or becomes the avenue through which life on our world comes to an end, it seems quite likely that this will be the most significant discovery of the generation.

It could probably be said with equal accuracy that the age which just preceded it was the Age of the Unconscious. Although not so widely recognized, yet the discovery and the exploration of the Unconscious was an accomplishment which has left an indelible imprint on most of the humanities—psychology, psychiatry, medicine, sociology,



anthropology, literature, music, art, and not least, upon religion.

Just as the names of Rutherford, Meitner, Einstein, Bohr, Compton, Oppenheimer, and Fermi are inseparably attached to the ushering in of the Atomic Age, so the names of Freud, Adler, Jung, Ferenczi and others are tied up with the discovery of the Unconscious. One need not substitute the writings of these men for the gospels to recognize that they have contributed almost beyond imagination to our understanding of man and his behavior.

The continued growth and training of specialists in religion of necessity must have two foci. It must lead to an understanding of and an acquaintance with the reality which stands back of and works through our universe—that is, we must know something of and become acquainted with God. No less important is the second focal point—an understanding of man and his behavior.

It is not necessary to point out that in the first area of understanding there has been great divergence of opinion in the thought of men through the ages and in different cultures. But that is without the province of our consideration in this discussion except insofar as our understanding of man may throw light upon the type of concept of God which a man develops and holds.

In the second area—the understanding of man—there seems to be a tendency always at work in education to deal with man only on a superficial level. There is sufficient reason for believing that the insight of Jesus into the depths of men's minds was complete. One comes to such a conclusion as the miracles of Jesus are studied. It

was said of him, "He knew all men, and required no evidence from anyone about human nature; well did he know what was in human nature."<sup>1</sup> Paul and Augustine and others have had deep insight. They have not spoken of the Unconscious as such, but, after all, there is a difference only in terminology.

The imperative laid upon us is to attain something of the same understanding of the only material with which we work—namely, human personality. For every religious worker this means some understanding of the Unconscious. The most elementary course in psychology introduces the student to the sphere of conscious processes, but there has been a strange reluctance in many places to dig deeper into the human mind. The purpose of this presentation will be to consider some of the implications of our modern knowledge of the Unconscious for the church in such fields of its ministry as preaching, Christian education, planning and leading of worship, counseling, and evangelism.

## I. THE UNCONSCIOUS

### *Relation of the Unconscious to Other Parts of the Mind*

For the sake of the initiate a brief description of the Unconscious mind must be given. Topographically we might use an analogy of the composition of the earth to illustrate the levels of the mind. There is the outer crust of the earth which is visible to everyone. It might be compared with the conscious mind with its ability of thinking, feeling, and willing, its ability of shifting the

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<sup>1</sup> John 2:25, *The Bible: A New Translation* by James Moffatt, Harper & Brothers, publishers.

focus of attention from one thing to another. Underneath the surface of the earth there are subterranean streams of water, at another level coal, farther down oil and gas. These are all the products of past ages and are recoverable for us without too much difficulty. Likewise in the human mind there are memories of experiences which can be recovered for use with comparatively little trouble. This level of the mind we call the preconscious.

Deep within the center of the earth, we are told, there is molten rock and metal. Under ordinary circumstances it is impossible to reach this level. This is the earth in its most primitive form, according to some scientists. Here there is unlimited power. This might be compared with the Unconscious. No one looking at the surface of the earth where he lives would dream that there is beneath him the sort of power that can split open mountains and spew out lava and ash. Yet it is there. He who studies only the conscious mind does not dream of the tremendously potent part of the person for which the conscious mind is only a thin veneer—that is, he would not dream of the presence of this other level unless he attempted to explain the content of some dream, or the nature of some wit, or the sort of thing that comes out in slips of speech, or the material given out when there is mental disorder of the more radical sort.

### *Contents of the Unconscious*

There are three types of material contained in the Unconscious. First, there is the record of all that a person has ever felt, or wished, or thought, or done. Some of

this material passes from consciousness in the normal process of forgetting, other because it is painful or unpleasant and is rejected by the conscious mind. It is interesting to observe that just about at the time that some religious educators succeed in emancipating children from the idea of a record of every deed being kept by God the psychotherapist discovers that actually such a record in minutest detail is kept within the unconscious mind of the person. It is true that for the most part such deposits remain undisturbed. It is also true that if any such deposits be associated with an unusual amount of emotion they may become the cause of inner turmoil resulting in the disorganization of the personality. It should be understood that the Unconscious becomes the repository for a large part of the prohibitions and taboos which surround certain activities. It is a mistake to assume that Conscience or the Censor works entirely at the conscious level. It is precisely because the Censor does so much of its work at an unconscious level that there is so much production of symptoms that are strange and hard to understand. Second, the Unconscious is the seat of the life instincts or drives and the source of life energy. Whether one thinks of this life energy as being undifferentiated and calls it Libido, or Hormic Urge, or Elan Vital, or thinks of it as being inherently pointed in the direction of giving love and being loved, getting food, sexual satisfaction, and security, expressing hostility and aggressiveness, matters not too much. Its seat is within the Unconscious. C. G. Jung held that there is a third type of material. It is a store of racial experience, an



inherited predisposition to certain ways of thinking. Ideas of magic power or magic substance, of spirits and their behavior, of demons and gods—all of these are what Jung has called archetypes and are to be found universally.

### *Characteristics of the Unconscious*

We should note certain characteristics of this Unconscious. It cannot lie when you reach it. It is only the facts of experience. Ordinarily, it cannot be driven. When unconscious desires conflict with the will, ordinarily it will be undermined. It has no words. It presents its desires by means of the dream and the symbolic symptom—either mental or physical. It is resistant to exploration by its conscious partner and chooses rigorously what it wants to release. Its emotions are infantile, easily transferable from one object to another. It has tremendous power over the conscious mind to influence it and over bodily functions, being able to bring about a disease or cause an accident which injures the body to serve its own purposes.

This is the Unconscious, the untamed and primitive area of the mind, in comparison with which the conscious mind seems very small and inadequate indeed.

We must now, having had our introduction to the nature of this part of the personality, begin the examination of its implications for the work of the church.

## II. IMPLICATIONS OF THE UNCONSCIOUS FOR THE MINISTRATIONS OF THE CHURCH

### *Preaching*

The more understanding of the unconscious mind a minister achieves, the more he will wish that he had done no preaching until he had achieved some such insight—or perhaps only that he had preached differently. For, one of the most subtle temptations for the unwary preacher is that he will project his own unconscious or half-conscious forbidden desires upon his congregation and then preach to them regarding these desires, which he is sure he sees in them. One preacher will not forget a vitriolic sermon that he preached on the matter of loose moral standards with regard to sex. It was true that one of the pillars of his church had taken a married woman home in his auto and had tried to kiss her. But what it was that put the strong emotion into the sermon was that the minister himself had unacceptable desires with regard to a young woman who lived near by. These desires were unacceptable to him because of his devotion to a young woman whom he expected to marry. No sermon completely escapes being autobiographical, just as no novel does, or no piece of music. But every preacher should recognize that in so-called “prophetic preaching” he may be preaching a sermon against what he finds within himself, unless he has come to know himself pretty well.

It is likewise possible to project one’s doubts on the congregation and then through one’s sermons slay all the dragons that presumably are threatening the faith

of the people. It is this type of thing which sometimes causes people to go away from a sermon and say, "I wonder what the preacher was really driving at this morning."

Condemnatory preaching should not be passed without mention. This type of preaching has at times and in places been standard practice for the producing of guilt and bringing about of repentance. It can only be noted here that in many cases of mental illness the load of guilt is much too great with the person finding no possible way out. This may be true in spite of the fact that some such people have been faithful church members with apparently blameless lives. Might it be possible that condemnatory preaching is unnecessary and that guilt automatically develops when the impulses and desires of the person are compared with the ideal? More must be said with regard to deliverance from guilt when we discuss evangelism.

The preacher may desire to escape from, but in reality never can escape from, the fact that his most effective preaching is done by virtue of what he is. People are changed most by unconsciously becoming like one whom they love and admire and respect. We call this identification.

Whether he wishes it or no, the minister is a symbol of God to the people. Dr. Albert Beaven used to make the practice of having a junior sermon each Sunday morning for the children. As the children would file out Dr. Beaven would smile at them as they looked up at him. One Sunday morning after they had all filed out, one of

the little girls was found crying profusely. When asked what was the matter, she cried, "I looked up and smiled at God, and he didn't smile back."

Horace Bushnell in his great sermon on Unconscious Influence was getting at this fact of the importance of what a person is in addition to what he says. If the sermon be not incarnate in the preacher it lays little hold on the unconscious lives of the people. Great preaching then must be the incarnation of the Living Word of God in human flesh through the identification of the minister with Christ. No more does the minister consciously accomplish this in himself than does the member of the parish consciously become like the minister. This process of identification goes on only where there is love. Paul's words are appropriate. He said, "I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, Christ lives in me; the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me."<sup>2</sup> Our own preaching will become effective pretty largely to the extent that the Word of God becomes incarnate in the preacher. Our knowledge of the unconscious process of identification makes of this not a choice but an imperative for the minister.

### *Christian Education*

One of the things of which our study of the Unconscious has convinced us is the very great part which the early relationships in the home have to do with the formation of the character of the child. I do not believe that

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<sup>2</sup> Galatians 2:20, *The Bible: A New Translation by James Moffatt*, Harper & Brothers, publishers.



this statement is strong enough. It is too likely that it will be taken as only another trite statement about the importance of the home. One feels tempted to say that in comparison with the amount of time that a child spends with its parents and its brothers and sisters and its community gang the traditional hour or two on a Sunday is hardly worth the effort.

The only thing that can even to a very small extent redeem that minute amount of time is to give the child a teacher who loves greatly and who is emotionally mature. For the little child, what the teacher says about God is not going to mean half as much as whether this teacher is a loving, understanding person. But even with such teachers, our knowledge of the way in which the Unconscious is formed and the strength it has would lead us to believe that there are only two alternatives open to us in the Christian education of children. Either we must put most of the emphasis in the Christian education of children upon training parents to be better parents with an understanding of child needs or we must succeed in finding more time for the right kind of teachers to be with children—much more time. It may well be that the first of these is the more feasible, but it means a considerable shift in emphasis, and means doing more in this direction than is being done anywhere in the church as of the present.

It need scarcely be said that the truth about the unconscious process of identification is just as important an implication in doing Christian teaching as it is for the preacher. At least half of what is received from a

teacher comes through the unconscious identification of the pupil with the teacher—maybe as much as ninety-five per cent. As a matter of fact, if the teacher is the kind of person who arouses chiefly hostility in a child, the child will not only consciously reject the teacher but is likely unconsciously to reject the ideas that the teacher was presenting.

There is little honest rejection of the tenets of the Christian faith by children of church homes and Sunday schools on an intellectual basis. The skepticism that one finds so much of is more often the symbolic rejection of a parent or Sunday-school teacher or minister who has aroused feelings of hostility which the boy or girl did not dare express openly. This fact only serves to underscore the importance of securing the kind of teachers who will love children and be loved by them.

### *Planning and Leading Worship*

In such a brief section it is possible to note only a few of the implications of the Unconscious for divine worship. There is no scientific evidence to support it, but it is my belief that engaging in corporate confession of guilt is for many people one of the very great values of divine worship. There is a considerable load of unconscious guilt carried by many people, varying in age from small children to old age. A corporate confession, if well written and led with sincerity, whether in the form of unison reading, or hymn, or statement spoken by the minister, permits many folk to feel that their own guilt is included, as indeed it is. It is lamentable that

there are a considerable number of churches where there is no such experience planned as a part of divine worship, usually because the minister does not believe in the reality of sin.

In worship leadership, whether he likes it or not, the minister becomes a priest. There is no choice here for the minister or teacher as to whether he will be priest or not, but only whether he will adequately represent his people to God and God to his people. In his very manner of speech and tone of voice, in his handling of the Bible or of the communion elements, in his gesture with which he calls the people to prayer or pronounces the benediction—in all of these things the minister either becomes a mediator of the grace and mercy of God to his people or he helps to build up a concept of God as a feelingless and fearful deity. For, it must constantly be remembered, much of the concept of God which any person has evolves from that person's experience with his own father and with any so-called representative of God.

What we know of the Unconscious leads us to believe that in the experience of divine worship the putting into the proper words of intellectual concepts is of not nearly so great importance as the bringing about of a wholesome emotional state created by the familiarity and beauty of the tune. The words of the prayers are not as important as the only partly conscious realization that just now the people are engaging in confession, and now in adoration, and now in outreaching intercession and petition. A complete understanding of all of the ideas in the Scripture lesson is not as important as the marginal and largely un-

conscious observance of the way in which the minister handles the Book and the attitude of the remainder of the people as they listen. As already is apparent, this is all leading up to my own statement of belief that when there is a real experience of divine worship, it is far better for little children to be a part of the family which is in turn swallowed up in the larger fellowship as the family participates in divine worship than for them to be taken off somewhere to be entertained, or even under pretty good leadership to play and hear stories. This is not because of any great understanding of the words or ideas that the child hears but largely because of the emotional experience of being a part of a loving family which is joining with other families in divine worship.

It will be remembered that one of the characteristics of the Unconscious is that it does not use words. Its means of communication is through symbols. Many of these symbols are primitive and archaic. Blood and the cross and washing feet may be repulsive and revolting to the conscious mind—never to the Unconscious, for which the coin of exchange is symbolism. It is quite within the realm of probability that our most effective way of reaching the Unconscious in worship is through the use of its own language, that of symbolism.

The highest thing to be desired in the experience of worship is that the process of identification of the worshiper be turned toward the figure of Christ. Identification with a beloved minister who bears in himself some of the marks of Christ helps in this direction, but the *summum bonum* goes beyond that so that the worshiper



can say with Paul, "But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit."<sup>3</sup>

### *Counseling*

Perhaps no other function of the religious worker will be so much affected by his understanding of the Unconscious as that of counseling. If he takes seriously such understanding it will practically mean a different approach to counseling from beginning to end.

Carl Rogers says that case records for social workers of twenty years ago show that the usual psychotherapy in a case consisted of "urging and advising."<sup>4</sup> If that was true of social workers twenty years ago perhaps we need not feel too bad when we realize that this is pretty widely the current method of counseling among ministers yet today. Some time ago in a meeting where there was a report of what was rather obviously a personality problem in the relation of a pastor to a church, a minister remarked, "Just send a committee to counsel with them. Usually all that is needed in a case like this is for someone to sit down and give some good fatherly advice." The author does not know the personalities involved in the case referred to, but he would be willing to risk the prediction that the difficulty cannot really be settled by the giving of advice.

As a matter of fact, the worker who is pretty confident

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<sup>3</sup> 2 Corinthians 3:18.

<sup>4</sup> Carl Rogers, *Counseling and Psychotherapy*, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1942. Page 20.

that the way to counsel is usually through rather paternally or maternally giving advice is quite likely to miss the very root of the trouble about which the person wants to talk. This is true because almost without exception a person who comes for help talks about a number of things first which are totally irrelevant to the central problem. It is here that the ready adviser is quite likely completely to miss his opportunity to be of help unless he understands the resistance of the Unconscious to the giving up of material which is causing the difficulty.

### *Evangelism*

Evangelism is closely related to counseling. J. A. C. Murray feels that the leading of a person in need to a source of forgiveness and power which is found in Jesus Christ is the natural outgrowth of counseling for him who is a Christian counselor.<sup>5</sup> Sometimes counseling which digs into the Unconscious and uncovers there material which is not so nice is questioned as to its value. Someone says, "But is it not just the anxiety and illness and loss which is cured in this counseling process that the gospel is meant to cure? Is not the whole of the gospel full of the promise of fresh power and forgiveness and companionship and healing free to all?" But such a question is not carefully thought through.

Counseling is sometimes necessary in healing and salvation precisely as the church visible is necessary. The reason for this is, of course, that the gospel needs declaration and unfolding and with particular people with pe-

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<sup>5</sup> J. A. C. Murray, *An Introduction to a Christian Psychotherapy*, Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark. Chapter XV.

culiar needs this may require spiritual surgery. Sometimes we can best make straight the way for the gospel if we, through our counseling on the basis of our understanding of the Unconscious, remove the blocks and complexes which hinder the gospel. *We* do not heal the person any more than the physician who treats a burn. We only open the way for the incomprehensible healing power of Christ.

Evangelism which is done with an understanding of the Unconscious will make much of the unlimited forgiveness and pardon of God for the guilt which is such a burden. For most people it is not necessary to create a feeling of guilt. The feeling of guilt is often already present, especially if Christ has been held up. What is needed is for the person to realize that he can be forgiven. Evangelism will seek to put a new object of devotion at the center of the person's life. This is essentially what happens in a religious conversion.

At this point the religious worker should beware. If the person has consciously accepted a new center for his life and has had all conscious guilt forgiven, it would seem that he would remain a joyous, creative, victorious person. But this is a very superficial point of view which overlooks the very great part of the personality which is not conscious and therefore cannot be consciously surrendered to a new object of devotion. As a result the person who has made a promising start in the Christian life or who may have been living a committed life for years finds impulses and desires welling up within him which do not at all fit with what he expects of himself as a Christian.

It is precisely here that the Christian doctrine of sanctification applies. For in evangelism it is not possible—or shall we say likely?—that the whole of a man be cleaned up in one operation. Rather, conversion is a new birth, as Jesus said. But the Unconscious remains to be taken over by God. This is the work of the Holy Spirit or the Spirit of God working within us. Was it not the need for just this progressive consolidation of God's position in the entire personality that Jesus recognized when he said to his disciples, "He [the Holy Spirit] remains with you and will be within you"?<sup>6</sup> Can the Unconscious be so taken over by Christ that its drives and desires become harmonized with the conscious mind which has been committed to Christ? Psychology as such has no answer. But it does seem to me that there are some such people. They are not the quiet, passive individuals who hardly breathe for fear of contaminating the air or dare not make a move for fear of sinning. They are people in whom the tremendous power of the Unconscious has been united with the intelligence and will of the conscious mind. They are tremendously alive and creative. Jesus was the perfect example of such harmony. Any others are imperfect examples.

The development of such people—people who are not pushed about by inner turmoil, people who are not slaves to the demands of their unconscious drives, people who are not so inhibited by unconscious prohibitions that they are completely innocuous, people who have sharpened

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<sup>6</sup> John 14:17, *The Bible: A New Translation by James Moffatt*, Harper & Brothers, publishers,



their intellects to understand the universe in which they live, people who have great life drives out of the Unconscious but whose drives have been harnessed to conscious constructive ends, people who enjoy inner peace and poise but who step forth with courage to face life, people whose hostilities are aimed at the destruction of evil and not evildoers, people who experience the joy of feeling unity within themselves—this is the end toward which all of these functions of the church point and in whose service the knowledge of the Unconscious can be the handmaiden.

## Chapter IV

### *The Church and Religious Illiteracy*

David J. Wieand

Last year on the famous radio program, *Town Meeting of the Air*, Charles Clayton Morrison stated categorically that both the secular community and the membership of the church are religiously illiterate. They are almost totally ignorant of the church's history, theology, cultus, and social significance.<sup>1</sup>

Any Sunday-school teacher who will take the trouble to test his student's knowledge in religious areas can document the truth of this generalization.

#### THE CAUSES OF RELIGIOUS ILLITERACY

##### *The Industrial Revolution and Its Naturalistic Philosophy*

What is the cause of the current widespread religious illiteracy? The underlying source is the naturalistic philosophy which pervades our American culture. Voltaire

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<sup>1</sup> "Are We Losing Our Religion?" *Town Meeting*, Vol. 11, No. 42, (February 14, 1946). Page 10.

See also Paul H. Vieth, *The Church and Christian Education*, Bethany Press. Pages 153, 283, 294.

said that nothing is so powerful as an idea whose time has come. With the onset of the industrial revolution in the nineteenth century and with the whirlwind advance in man's mastery of nature with almost atomic speed in the twentieth, together with the steady forcing back of the frontier of the mysterious unknown, man has become so overwhelmed and so preoccupied with the material world—with assembly lines, gadgets, push buttons, innerspring mattresses and movie palaces—that he has lost his contact with and consequently his sense of the reality of the spiritual world; he has, in effect, denied the reality of the supernatural.

Yet it is this very supernatural realm which gives to the Christian faith its distinctive beliefs and its historic power. Belief in the reality of spirit and personality, in immortality, in true freedom of choice, in the supreme value of the individual and in a God who reveals himself to man in the person of Jesus Christ as righteous and redemptive—all these beliefs are denied by a naturalistic philosophy.

### *The Disintegration of the Family*

Home, church, and school, primary educational institutions of society, have been basically affected by the industrial revolution and by the naturalistic philosophy. In the first place the family has greatly disintegrated. For multitudes of Americans the vocational, the religious, the educational, and the avocational activities no longer are in the home. The home has become a place to eat and sleep—a hotel, in many cases, for all but the very young

members of the family. Father and mother work; brother and sister spend the day in school and then play baseball or loaf at the corner drugstore, run home to supper, and probably dash off to the movies. For the country as a whole, one divorce is granted for every three marriages. Larger cities register more appalling figures. For example, according to the *Christian Century*, Portland's (Oregon) 1944 records totaled three thousand four hundred sixty-six marriage licenses issued to four thousand eight hundred seventy-seven divorce suits filed. For the year 1946, divorces in Denver outnumbered marriages seven to one.<sup>2</sup> The incidence of venereal disease is unbelievably shocking.

The point at which this disintegration impinges upon our problem lies in the absence of religious training in the home. The atmosphere of the American home reflects the materialistic scientism of our culture. Moreover, the home lacks such specific religious nurture as the old-time family altar, the reading of Bible stories and instruction in how to pray. The home has turned its surviving religious aspirations over to the church, expecting it to assume primary responsibility for the religious nurture of the children.

### *The Failure of the Church*

How well is the church succeeding in coping with the problem of religious illiteracy? Most religious leaders would confess that the job is inadequately done. The church has not reached much more than half of the na-

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<sup>2</sup> See the *Christian Century* for December 5, 1945, and February 12, 1947.



tion's population. Only twenty per cent of the pupils in one of Chicago's grammar schools have any religious connections. Within the church membership itself large numbers of persons are inactive. Even among those members actively in touch with the church, religious illiteracy is high.

Why is this so? Here again scientism has not been without her devotees in the ministry, within the laity, and among religious educators. Some specific causes are: neglect of the education function by the minister, lack of financial resources, poor equipment, untrained teachers, poor methods of teaching, lack of preparation, and inadequate time. A professor of religious education in a large university stated that his children get more religion from the public school than from the Sunday school. In sum it must be said that the Sunday school is not adequately meeting the challenge of religious illiteracy.

What of the weekday church school? The weekday church school has met with a favorable response. The total number of pupils enrolled in this movement has steadily increased.<sup>3</sup> Teachers are well trained and equipment is fairly adequate though numerous exceptions could be cited. For instance, one good student, in a progressive community, with different teachers from the fifth grade to high school, reached a negative appraisal. He looked at the results obtained and judged many of the teachers incompetent. Order prevailed notably under the sobering presence of the superintendent of schools or

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<sup>3</sup> The radio program, *Religion in the News*, on February 15, 1947, reported that some 2,000,000 students are now in weekday church schools in comparison with 750,000 in 1941.

some other visitor. The general atmosphere was care-free and lacking in discipline.

The outstanding criticisms that can be levied against the weekday church school are: pupils feel that they are "out of school"; one period a week is hardly adequate for constructive work; religion is separated from the general curriculum; no provision is made for utilizing the religious potential of other subjects. Certainly, therefore, the weekday church school is not in itself an adequate solution to the problem of religious illiteracy.

### *The Impotence of the School*

Is the public school in general coping with the problem of religious illiteracy? It is not. In part this stems from our historic doctrine of the separation of church and state, which most Americans assume means that the school must be a-religious. "Educate for citizenship" has been a repeated cry. Culture and knowledge have been looked upon as ends in themselves. The vocational aim has leaped its bounds as water over a crumbling dam.

In most communities there is no direct relationship between the school and the church. The school goes its way, the church hers, and the pupil attempts to go both ways. But the student cannot serve two masters. The school adequately equipped and arrayed with extracurricular activities makes a gala appeal to the student in contrast with the inadequately equipped church. With so much of the child's time taken up by the school, so many of his interests wrapped up in it, his loyalty tends to center in the school rather than in the church under

whose influence he spends but one or at the most two hours per week. The child accepts the teachings of the school as true. He breathes the atmosphere of its philosophy: pragmatism, experimentalism, science, behaviorism, and at times atheism.

Weigle remarks, "The forces of atheism and irreligion are beginning to lay claim to the public school as if these schools belonged to them."<sup>4</sup> His summary of the situation still holds:

Education and religion are too far sundered in America today. . . . We have intrusted the education of our children almost wholly to a system of public schools and that at the same time we have stripped these schools almost wholly of religious elements. . . .<sup>5</sup> The field of their activity (the schools') is as broad as life. . . .<sup>6</sup> Yet the strange fact is that neither the actual public schools of America nor the ideal schools of Professor Dewey's educational theory are quite true to life. They omit religion. . . . The situation would seem impossible if it were not true. . . .<sup>7</sup> This situation is fraught with danger. The omission of religion from the program of public education inevitably conveys to children a negative suggestion. They cannot help but notice the omission. It is bound to discredit religion in their minds. They cannot but conclude that religion is negligible, or unimportant, or irrelevant to the real business of life. . . . This danger is greater today than ever before just because the public schools are greater today than ever before. . . . The omission . . . conveys a powerful condemnatory suggestion.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Luther A. Weigle, "Religious and Secular Education," in *Religion the Dynamic of Education*, W. M. Howlett (ed.), Harper & Brothers. Page 25.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* Page 10.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* Page 12.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* Page 15.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* Page 17.

Weigle is right. Under our present system of education, largely influenced by John Dewey and our "scientific age," students can hardly escape being swept into a materialistic, pragmatic outlook on life. The emphasis on man in contradistinction to God leads on quite naturally to an emphasis on self in contradistinction to society. The central pragmatic belief that what works is true is a partial cause of both of these. Individualism is closely linked up with them. Such attitudes as "getting by," "What do I get out of it?" and "What good is it?" result.

In summary we have held that religious illiteracy in the United States is appalling. Home, church, and school have not stopped the inroads of the industrial revolution and the naturalistic philosophy on our culture. We are cut off from the roots that produced us.

#### OVERCOMING RELIGIOUS ILLITERACY

In the last analysis religious illiteracy can be overcome only as its fundamental causes are removed. While the industrial revolution cannot be done away with, man must discover channels through which it can flow without destroying the basic institution of society and without negating man's spiritual affinity. Decentralization, improved working conditions, shorter working hours, and participation by labor in management and ownership point the way toward a solution.

Further, the naturalistic philosophy inchoately subscribed to by the individual must be supplanted by the Christian theology; the cult of science must be replaced by the religion of Christ.



Suggestions for meeting the above problems and the failure of home, church, and school follow. In this task the church must be the initiating agency. Consequently, the suggestions are presented from the standpoint of what the church can do (1) within her own institution, (2) in her relation to the school and (3) in her relation to the home. The writer makes no attempt to be exhaustive. Instead, he notes those suggestions which he feels give the most promise of success.

### *The Church*

How can the church meet the problem of religious illiteracy through her evangelistic and educational endeavors? The immensity of the task of evangelism both within and without the church is staggering. While the rate of increase of church membership is greater than the percentage of increase in the population at large, the number of non-Christians is swelling, not diminishing. In America today there are more people who are not members of the church than there were five years ago. And the field of evangelism by no means lies entirely in the secular community. Within the church membership are large numbers of people who subscribe to the cult of materialistic scientism.

The evangelistic task is too great for the minister alone to complete. The day of high-pressured mass evangelism is, for the most part, gone. If America is to be won to the Christian way of life, the laymen must win her.

In recent years the most heartening development in this area has been the method of home visitation. Lay-

men go out two by two to win individuals to Christ and the church. In some places this takes the form of an evangelistic campaign. In others, interested persons unite to form a fellowship of service which carries on a regular program of home visitation. Here lasting results come about primarily through the cultivation of friendships. A member will, so to speak, "adopt" a family as his particular responsibility. His aim is not merely to secure a decision but more—to insure understanding, steadfastness, and growth in the Christian life. If possible, he should arrange a regular hour for discussing vital matters of the Christian faith and for Bible study in the home of the prospective or new member.

Radio broadcasting offers another means of meeting the problem of religious illiteracy. In this area tremendous opportunities lie before the church, opportunities of reaching homes not now touched and also of extending the number of hours in which the church ministers to her people. The period of beginnings is past. Already a number of our ministers are engaged in some radio work. The time is ripe for the Church of the Brethren to enter this field of service with a varied program of the highest caliber. A church which is planning a new building in a metropolitan area would do well to consult radio technicians while plans are still in the blueprint stage in order that the sanctuary may be adapted for broadcasting.

Then, too, the ministry as a whole must get a vision of the importance of the educational aspect of the church's job. All too frequently the pastor feels that his responsi-

bility lies almost wholly in the ministry of preaching and in the conduct of public worship. Yet the church of tomorrow will be built out of the Sunday-school pupils of today. If the laity's ignorance concerning the Christian faith and its implications for the modern workaday world is to be alleviated, the minister of tomorrow must give his best thinking and a considerable portion of his time to the educational work of the church as it relates both to the youth and to the adult membership.<sup>9</sup>

If the church is to meet the problem of religious illiteracy through its educative function, three basic conditions must be fulfilled. First, the educational program of the church must be undergirded by the Christian philosophy of education instead of the educational philosophy of John Dewey. This does not mean that the church should not avail herself of the modern educational techniques but it does mean that the scientism and the "religious" of Dewey are a far cry from the Christian view of God and the world. Second, the educational program of the church must be implemented by an adequate leadership. One might almost say that this is the only way in which the church can meet the problem of religious illiteracy. The church must co-opt the best personnel she possesses. Here the primary requisites are commitment to the Christian way, and devotion to the students one serves. Third, the educational program of the church must command a sufficient portion of an individual's time to develop a fellowship if success is to be achieved. One outstanding youth group meets four and often five

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<sup>9</sup> See P. H. Vieth, *The Church and Christian Education*. Pages 105, 106.

times a week in a varied program of Bible study, Christian service, discussion, club, social and athletic activities. In comparison to the basic triumvirate outlined above, questions of curriculum, finance, and equipment are secondary.

Another means of dealing with the problem of religious illiteracy is that of classes in church membership. These are of value not merely as a preparation for entrance into the church but also as a nurturing influence in the period immediately following baptism. Such classes are of special significance in a church which historically depended upon the home to provide religious instruction.

Though religious illiteracy is by no means confined to the young, education on the adult level has frequently been neglected by the church. Here one of the most effective techniques is that of the "University of Life" or "School of Christian Living." For a specified number of weeks Sunday evenings are given over to classes in prayer, church history, a Bible book, religion and health, or the Christian home. Each evening session closes with a brief period of worship in the sanctuary.

Further, I believe the problem of religious illiteracy on the adult level could be met by a type of a twentieth-century variety of the *collegia pietatis*. The most effective progress in understanding matters religious and in applying Christianity to the modern world could be made by small fellowship groups of individuals within the churches. It would be the purpose of these groups to extend their knowledge of Christianity, to discover its implica-



tions for today, and to implement their religion. They would employ the methods of prayer, Bible study and the study of problems both personal and social. In a historic peace church which has been demonstrated by President Rufus D. Bowman to be at the present time officially a pacifist church but in reality "a non-pacifist church with a strong pacifist minority,"<sup>10</sup> one of the functions of such fellowship groups might well be to foster the understanding and extension of the Christian pacifist position. Such fellowship groups should provide the spiritual dynamic and the growing edge for the church of the future.

### *The Church in Relation to the School*

How can the church meet the problem of religious illiteracy as it relates to the school? Training Christian teachers for the public school will help. This places a heavy responsibility upon the Christian college, especially as it faces the crushing problems following in the backwash of the war. If, in a given community, we can secure public school officials and teachers who are sincere Christians, we will have taken a definite step forward in the solution of the problem of religious illiteracy for that community, for school and church should be able to find a large area of co-operation. In some states the Bible can continue to be read and the Lord's Prayer prayed as an act of worship. Why should not the Bible be studied as literature? It contains some of the greatest writing in the world and has left an indelible mark on the world's literature. Surely in many communities great portions

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<sup>10</sup> A public statement of R. D. Bowman in the Bethany chapel, 1946. See also his *The Church of the Brethren and War*.

of the Bible can be studied objectively without serious objection on the part of religious groups.

Religious literacy can be promoted by securing released time for Christian education during school hours. Some schools give credit for courses in this area.

One of the most significant steps has been the introduction of elective courses in religion into the regular program of the public school. This has the advantage of integrating religion with school life.

Where the church has not been able to secure these privileges some groups have organized after-school classes in religion. Here is a further opportunity to promote religious literacy.

When all this has been said, it still remains true that scientism is in the saddle in the public school and that consequently the nation's children are absorbing the naturalistic philosophy of the school community rather than the philosophy of the Christian religion. What can the church do to meet this menace? Vieth says, "If the public school is to remain secularized, there is ground for the suggestion which is now frequently heard that the parochial school should be resorted to by Protestantism."<sup>11</sup> As the Church of the Brethren meets the world, its peculiar doctrines are being sloughed off; it is moving rapidly from sect to church, from nonconformity to conformity. How far can the Church of the Brethren go in being *in* the world and yet not *of* the world? The church believes in maintaining colleges in which she has a voice in the training of her youth. Why does not the same logic ap-

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<sup>11</sup> Paul H. Vieth, *The Church and Christian Education*. Page 302.

ply to the necessity of the church's voice in education on the lower levels? A system of parochial schools would go far toward maintaining and propagating the significant contributions of the Brethren heritage to the Christian way of life and would be a definite step forward in combating religious illiteracy and the naturalistic philosophy of life.

### *The Church in Relation to the Home*

How can the church meet the problem of religious illiteracy as it relates to the home? In the first place there must be on the part of the leadership and the laity the clear-cut recognition that the home is the fountainhead of religion. Apart from the Christian family the church would cease to exist. The primary responsibility for religious nurture lies with the home. In a real sense, the father is verily the priest and the prophet of the family. Historically the Church of the Brethren has grown by natural propagation, by keeping its children within the folds of the church. New churches have usually been founded in new communities by groups of Brethren families which have migrated thither. Further, in view of the findings of modern psychology that the early years of life have the greatest effect on determining what an individual will become, the problem of religious illiteracy cannot be solved until the home again becomes the stronghold of the Christian faith. The home environment should be distinctly religious. The parents should have a vital experience of God themselves and should gradually lead the child into such an experience.

In the second place, the church can assist in building religious foundations in the home. The ideal place to begin is with young couples before marriage. Here classes in the Christian family, including the discussion of problems of courtship, are of inestimable worth. Further, there is the process of premarital counseling. It is doubtful that a minister under normal circumstances should marry a couple without insisting upon a premarital conference. Once the new home has been established the minister can readily make available to the parents such things as home dedication services, materials for personal and family devotions, and lists of outstanding religious literature for children. Children will as readily look at and read attractive religious books as secular. For developing the religious life of the home outstanding opportunities exist in the largely unworked period from birth to kindergarten. Baby dedication services provide an opportunity for securing the pledge of parents to raise their children under Christian influences. Further, the church has a responsibility to provide training which will contribute to the religious life of the family. Here belong classes in Christian family life, in prayer, and in the development of the child from the religious point of view. Then too, the pastor should, so to speak, bring the church to the home; he should enter the home as its spiritual adviser, help in setting up religious activities in the family circle, and participate occasionally in its religious life.

In the last analysis, however, *the family cannot be remade from without*. Apart from a genuine desire on



the part of the parents, the home cannot be rebuilt. This desire the church should help to create.

If the problem of religious illiteracy is to be met for our rising generation, their primary loyalty must be secured by the church, by a public school that has Christian teachers and a Christian atmosphere, by a parochial school, or by a Christian home. It is extremely difficult for any of these institutions to succeed in this task apart from the co-operation of the home.

#### CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have looked at the fact of religious illiteracy within the church and in the general community. We then found the major causes to be: (1) the industrial revolution and (2) its accompanying naturalistic philosophy of life, which have led in large part to (3) the breakdown of the home; (4) the failure of the church; and (5) the American doctrine of the separation of church and state which, combined with (1) and (2), has made the school impotent in combating religious illiteracy.

Finally, we made a series of suggestions as to how the church as the initiating agency may best attack the problem of religious illiteracy (1) through her own functions, (2) through her influence on the school, and (3) through her relation with the home. Only if the church can win an ever-widening acceptance in word and deed of the Christian philosophy with its implications for personal and social life, can she succeed in meeting the problem of religious illiteracy. May God grant to us wisdom and devotion sufficient for our task!

## Chapter V

### *The Mission of the Church to the World*

William M. Beahm

One of the marks of the present high view of the church is that Christian tasks once set up as independent and separate are now being defined in terms of the church. Sunday schools, youth movements, evangelism, world missions, and similar programs are being more specifically related to the organized programs of the church. There are those who bewail this tendency by the cry, "What we need is less churchianity and more Christianity!" While there are obvious perils involved, this exaltation of the church has clear warrant in the New Testament. The church is conceived as long enduring despite opposition (Matt. 16:18). The church is the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12) and the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:22-33). It would be hard to conceive of the church in more exalted terms. It is fitting therefore to conceive of our Christian tasks in the world as parts of the mission of the church.

It is important to consider the mission of the church

with reference to its various aspects. Let us look at it in fourfold terms: the compassionate mission, the teaching and prophetic mission, the evangelistic mission, and the churchly mission. It would be easy to set one of these over against the others as *the* mission of the church. This would be fruitless, however, for these should be viewed as parallel tasks even though some might be regarded as of greater value than others. To fail in any of them would make the church remiss in her duty and mission.

There is first of all the mission of compassion—the task of demonstrating the love of God in compassionate service. This is familiar to us in the present-day and broad-ranging service program of the church. It is felt by some to be something new in the work of the church. Indeed, it is new in its scope and resources as well as in its relevance and the allegiance it evokes. But this work is deep and ancient in its Christian rootage. It is based on the deeds of Jesus as he “went about doing good” (Acts 10:38). It is based on the significant place Jesus gave to his deeds of mercy (Luke 4:18-21; Matt. 11:2-6). It is based on the strong and explicit teachings of Jesus and the apostles as classically expressed in the parables of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) and of the judgment (Matt. 25:31-46). This program is likewise rooted in the church’s tradition of charity and the Pietistic tradition of exemplary Christian living. The world missionary program of the church gave increasing place to such endeavors in the last hundred years. The missionary doctor has been a familiar and indeed glamorous figure whether he be practicing in jungle areas or in the great urban centers

like Peking. This is attested to by such famous physicians as Grenfell, Harrison, Livingstone, Schweitzer, Scudder and Seagrave. Famine relief, agricultural development and trade schools have all fulfilled the example and word of Jesus in this mission of compassion.

In the wake of modern warfare the church has greatly expanded this program but is still falling far short of clear Christian warrant and obligation. As the church sees more clearly the utter contradiction between her own ideals and the war system, she carries on her ministry of compassion with the twin goal of meeting obvious and bitter needs in the name of Christ and of demonstrating a better approach to international problems. A non-military church has special readiness and obligation in this area. Such is the broad scope and relevance of this task of the church—the mission of compassion.

It need hardly be pointed out that such a world service program is not a substitute for the world missionary program but is co-ordinate with it. It is not the modern form of the gospel but an age-old aspect of it. Such a service program is not an alternative to the church but an arm of it. It is not in itself the answer to man's deepest needs but it is an answer to man's immediate and real needs and has relevance to his deepest needs. It is an authentic task of the church and an aspect of her world mission.

In the second place there is the teaching and prophetic mission of the church. This is the task of making clear and convincing the principles of the Kingdom of God according to the revelation of Christ. One could call this



the ethical function of the church if the view of ethics is characteristically Christian. Christianity is a religion of a strongly ethical nature. The rigorous ethical demands which the Old Testament prophets made upon the individual and the nation were in no wise abrogated by the founder of the Christian church. He came not to destroy but to fulfill the ancient law and he lifted the ethical requirements to the absolute level. Moreover, he embodied these principles in his own character and stood forth, on the one hand, as the authentic revelation of God's nature (John 1:18; 14:9) and, on the other, as the exacting standard of the Christian's life (Matt. 10:25, 38; Eph. 4:13; Heb. 12:3). Christianity is, however, far more than a system of ethical principles. These principles are rooted in the nature and demand of God and are thus far more than prudential maxims. Moreover, the Christian is measured and justified by faith rather than by works. He is saved by grace and forgiveness rather than by ethical achievement. He is not saved by character, albeit he is saved unto character. Such is the ethical nature of Christianity and this validates the teaching and prophetic mission of the church.

It is the task of the church therefore to challenge and withstand the rival philosophies which claim the allegiance of men. With true Christian instinct the church takes issue, for example, with the naturalism which limits God to the processes of nature and which binds him so completely within the natural order that miracles are denied on principle. Nature is not the body of God but a work of God. God is the Lord of nature, not its servant.

Nature's regularity is the expression of God's integrity but this need not limit God's working to the mechanism of his own creation when it suits his sovereign purpose to take extraordinary steps. The church takes issue, as another example, with the modernism which argues that the latest in time is the best in fact, and measures the Christian revelation by present standards of truth and value without measuring present standards of truth and value by the Christian revelation. Christianity is, to be sure, an up-to-date religion having always a current vitality and relevance. It is a religion also which is forward-looking in hope and expectation. But it remains a religion based on the nature and work of its Lord, who has already lived and wrought the saving deeds of our salvation. Jesus Christ is the fixed norm of the church and the church has regarded him as "the same yesterday and today, yea and for ever" (Heb. 13:8). Christians rightly divide history between B.C. and A.D. and find the meaning of even modern history in the standard which was given at that watershed of time.

It is the task of the church likewise to clarify the principles by which men are to live. This includes the pronouncement of judgment on what is wrong and evil as well as the clarification of those positive principles by which men's lives may be rightly guided. The most time should be spent on these positive principles, for without them there is no hope. But this does not preclude the warnings of judgment and doom that help to dissuade men from evil. This task applies to man's social relations as well as to his individual life. The individual is the

unit of sin as well as of salvation. No repentance or forgiveness is valid or effective except as it centers in individual lives. But there is also a social dimension to man's sin and his redemption. The individual must maintain his social relations according to the standard of Christ. Moreover, social relations have much bearing on the development of the individual as, for example, in the home and the neighborhood. Whenever we urge the need of good homes or seek to eliminate plague spots in the community we are utilizing the social aspects of the gospel. The error of the "social gospel" lies in the assumption that a rearrangement of social relations or environment is in itself sufficient for man's redemption. This problem of individual and group life has been described as being like a tunnel. If you enter at either end and keep going, you will come out the other. This prophetic task applies both to the Christian and to the non-Christian, to the church and to the world. It is indeed the right and the duty of the church to announce principles of right living to all men. Stealing and murder are wrong whether committed by Christians or non-Christians. If we say it is all right for the worldling to wage war but it is wrong for the Christian, why should we not also say it is all right for a worldling to commit adultery while it is wrong for the Christian. While these standards thus apply to all men, it is indeed incumbent upon the Christian to live a superior kind of life. He makes a greater profession and he has received greater grace. If the church therefore does not exemplify a higher ethical life than the world, then its prophetic message loses much of its

weight on the conscience of the world. One peril of our time is that ministers will seek by strategic pressure and pronouncements to influence political events without at the same time doing the spade work of developing intelligent consensus among their own members. We are likewise in peril of attempting moral reforms by legislative pressure without at the same time raising the water table of moral concern in individuals and local groups.

This then is the teaching and prophetic mission of the church. In pulpit and classroom, by resolutions and discussion, this work must go forward in season and out of season. It must proceed in local communities and reach out across our one planetary world. It is the church's mission to make clear and convincing the principles of the Kingdom of God according to the revelation of Christ.

In the third place there is the evangelistic mission of the church. It is not enough to feed the world on the milk of human kindness. The world's people require also "the sincere milk of the word" (1 Peter 2:2). They require not only the "food which perisheth" but also the "food that abideth unto eternal life." Indeed, there appears to be no automatic and inevitable process by which the satisfaction of physical hunger will arouse spiritual hunger. While it may be fruitless to offer words to a man who is starving, it is equally fruitless to expect the meeting of physical needs to satisfy spiritual hungers. This is why the work of evangelism is a characteristic and urgent part of the church's task.

It is an urgent task because of man's deep and abiding need for spiritual help. Part of the Christian message is



its true diagnosis of man's condition. Beyond ignorance and immaturity, beyond poverty and pain is man's deep malady of sin. Some people find evidence of the fact in proof texts. Others find evidence in the questions and answers of the catechism. But all can find the grim evidence in the haunted and lonely faces of their friends as well as in the gnawing guilt and empty echoes of their own hearts. Sin is not merely a dogma—it is a pervasive fact. We try to give it other names like maladjustment, improper integration, human weakness or the imaginings of mortal mind. But the sense of lostness and inadequacy marks us all. All our devices and evasions can not quite hide it from us. When "the tumult and the shouting dies" we find no words truer to our condition than the classic confession, "We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done; and there is no health in us." This is not morbid self-depreciation. It is the forthright statement of fact. The need of regeneration is as age-old as history and as broad as the world.

The task of evangelism is made urgent also by the power of the gospel. The church from the start has flourished when it has been aware of this power. Its word to the world has been a glad word. The gospel has been good news whenever rightly understood. It has not meant the laying on but the lifting of burdens. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). "Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the

old things are passed away; behold, they are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). Nothing is more important for the church today than to have a fresh awareness of the power and relevance of the gospel.

The task of evangelism is made urgent because the Great Commission rests upon us unfulfilled. Great efforts have been made, and here and there revival fire has fallen. The number of nominal Christians can be swollen by statistical returns. But we should be startled by the fact that there are more non-Christians in the world today than there have ever been. It is urgent that the church bestir herself at this task. By press and radio, in pulpit and classroom, by mass appeal and by the persuasion of friend with friend, let the nets be cast again. "All things are of God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18).

The relation between the church and evangelism is reciprocal. In the first place, evangelism is essential to the church. Unless there is a constant harvest from evangelism the church will cease to exist. Each generation requires to be evangelized afresh, for Christians are not the result of the first birth but of the second. While family influence and community tradition may keep the church rolls filled nominally and for a while, the vital ongoing life of the church is fed by the recurrent and fresh experience with God which evangelism provides. Moreover, there is today a serious decline in family influence and a secularization of community tradition which make it more necessary than ever to keep the church alive by

evangelism. In the second place, the church is essential to conserve and develop the fruits of evangelism. This is not to assert as absolute dogma that there is no salvation outside the church as an organized institution. But it is to point out that the medium of Christian nurture and of growth in grace is the fellowship of the saints. The grace of love is not developed in isolation. "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren" (1 John 3:14). While it is clear that our redemption lies in being joined to Christ, the implication is equally clear that his Body is made up of "members in particular" (1 Cor. 12:12-27). One surmises that the salvation of many today is jeopardized by "floating membership" in the church (Heb. 10:25).

There is in the fourth place the churchly mission of the church. This does not refer primarily to the maintenance of an ecclesiastical institution although there is more merit even to that than is often allowed. By the churchly mission is meant the task of nurturing and perpetuating the brotherhood of believers in Christ, the fellowship of those whose sins are forgiven. There has been a widespread custom of discounting or overlooking this task of the church to maintain its own life. A prominent minister wrote a quarter of a century ago:

. . . One of the subtlest and most dangerous temptations to which the church is exposed, namely, the temptation to think of itself as an end in itself and not as a means to an end. . . . The only way in which the church can hope to save its life is by daring to lose it—by daring to lose sight of it. The church must stop

thinking about itself and begin to think about the community.<sup>1</sup>

This is true to the temper of both the liberals and the conservatives who deny the church any validity as an end in itself. And yet it is hard to reconcile this with the New Testament implications. Indeed, the church is explicitly viewed as the object of Christ's love and concern in St. Paul's exhortation to husbands to love their wives "even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it" (Eph. 5:25). Here the church is definitely an end. Recent thought about the church is more clear on this matter, as stated by Dr. John T. McNeill. After pointing out the limitations of the social-gospel view of the church as only a means to the Kingdom, as well as the distortion implied in the term *churchianity*, he goes on to speak of the church as an end.

We have come to see that unless the church *is* something she cannot *do* anything to redeem the world. . . . On this view the church becomes something else than merely the scaffolding for the structure of Utopia. It is itself the society most satisfying to the human soul. It is end as well as means.<sup>2</sup>

The church has an inner life of its own which is relevant to, but not contingent upon, the world around it. This inner life is fed not by the community around the church but by God within the church. The church is not self-centered but God-centered when she nurtures and per-

<sup>1</sup> Ernest F. Tittle, *What Must the Church Do to Be Saved?* Abingdon, 1921. Pages 23-24.

<sup>2</sup> "The Church: End as Well as Means," *Christendom*, Winter 1939. Pages 83-85.



petuates her inner life. This inner life, by the same token, is nurtured by the worship of God.

This churchly task includes much of the teaching work of the church. It is needed to prepare the members for taking their place in the life of the fellowship. It is needed likewise to enable the members to live as intelligent and exemplary citizens in their communities. It is needed to make the Bible known among the members. It is needed to inform the members of their continuous history and of the faith by which they live. No amount of activity in community projects as such will take the place of this inner teaching task of the church.

This churchly task includes the work of the pastor in his parish. Hereby sorrows are assuaged and counsel is given in the perplexities of individual lives. It is to the glory of the church that repeated generations have had God mediated to them by faithful and often obscure pastors. Dr. Latourette affirms that the Christian ministry is a unique form of leadership among the religions of the world. This is true especially because

in most of its various forms it included the pastoral function, the care of individuals, with the ideal of loving, self-forgetful effort to win them to what the Christian conceives as the highest life and to help them to grow in it.<sup>3</sup>

This churchly task includes the maintenance of worship. The church is sometimes defined as "the worshiping congregation." This is the source of the church's peculiar power. Worship is likewise her ultimate function. Worship is not merely a process of securing power

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<sup>3</sup> K. S. Latourette, *The First Five Centuries*, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1937. Page 252.

to perform the work of the world. It is not merely a method of gaining enthusiasm to meet the world's needs. Worship is itself the answer to the world's great need. Men need to be led to worship and to be led in worship. The church has peculiar resources in providing worship services. The reading of Scripture and the preaching of the Word, the wealth of song and story, the rites of the Christian faith, the age-old and world-wide tradition of praise and prayer are part of the church's gift to the world. To benefit by these, however, the people of the world must themselves be brought into the worshipping congregation. This is the worship aspect of the church's task.

The churchly task also includes the provision of leadership and maintenance of order. To be sure, the work of God's Spirit is direct, pervasive and often unconventional. The jealous concern for ecclesiastical forms and authority is rightly viewed as perilous. But the absence of form and authority is not a promising alternative. The forms must be truly Christian. The authority must be in righteousness and consecration. The order must be subservient to the Spirit of God, which moves, like the wind, "where it listeth." Yet the church has gone forward not by the disregard of leadership and order but by their dedication to Christ's own will. The church is under the lordship of Christ "from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love" (Eph. 4:16).

These are the four aspects of the mission of the church to the world. It is a mission of compassionate service to demonstrate the love of God to the world. It is a teaching and prophetic mission to make clear and convincing the principles of the Kingdom of God according to the revelation of Christ. It is an evangelistic mission to present in persuasive terms the good news of salvation to all men everywhere. It is a churchly mission to nurture and perpetuate the fellowship of the followers of Christ. In all of these aspects the church is fulfilling the mission of Christ himself, who was healer and teacher, fisherman and shepherd. "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his teacher, and the servant as his lord" (Matt. 10:25).

## Chapter VI

### *The Church and the Times*

Floyd E. Mallott

There is a long span of development from the Apostolic Age to the Medieval Age. Our present-day Christian church in its various forms is the extension of the medieval church at the same time that it is a revolt against and a deviation from that medieval church.

Various groups have in thought and imagination identified themselves with the apostolic church. "A return to primitive Christianity" has been the slogan of more than one group since the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century raised aloft Peter Waldo's banner.

But the results have differed from group to group. One cannot say merely that the results have been diverse in proportion to the sincerity of the preachers. That would be an oversimplified analysis.

They have rather been diverse according to the background and presuppositions of the various preachers who have set out to preach the pure and simple gospel of Jesus.



Often the presuppositions of the preachers were hidden from themselves. But it may be said that the presuppositions of any movement arising since the early sixteenth century were constructed for it by the Renaissance and the Reformation.

It may be said that Christians of the world from the days of St. Augustine to those of Martin Luther were dominated by the ideas of the necessity of unity of mankind and the necessary unity of Christianity—Christendom.

All the combined knowledge of historians and sociologists does not enable us to give a satisfactory explanation of the disintegration of the Roman Empire. I suppose that until we can explain satisfactorily the "fall of Rome" there is bound to be some vagueness in our explanation of why the second Roman unity disintegrated.

The medieval vision was of a world state (known in their terms as the Holy Roman Empire) and a universal church. There was to be some sort of relationship between the world state and the world church for the salvation of mankind. Just what that relationship was intended to be according to the mind of God, the leaders of the Middle Ages did not agree on and never did get it clearly settled. The onrush of the modern age submerged them together with their issues.

The average student of today frequently has little appreciation of the true character of the Middle Ages. It has been so emphasized to him that the world church became worldly and the world state became ineffective that the grandeur of the vision and the significance of the effort are scarcely realized.

As already said, we cannot be too positive in analyzing the disintegration of this medieval unity. The incompetence, corruption and stupidity of the leadership of both church and state seem to have been a major factor. The Renaissance and the Reformation were the twin movements which swept Europe and wrecked the dreams of a theocratic world unity.

In calling the Renaissance and the Reformation twins we are adopting a figure needing discrimination in application. Some historians have sadly misrepresented them as Siamese twins. Nor were they identical twins, agreeing in their views of the goals of mankind. They are twins of the character of Esau and Jacob. But in this case it is the Esau-like movement we name the Renaissance that seemingly has obtained the wrestler's hold and it is to be feared that the hold has not yet been broken.

For anything like a realistic survey of the twentieth century can but reflect a qualified credit on the Renaissance and the Reformation. Insofar as these two movements have molded the modern world one must look at them interrogatively.

The best definition of the Renaissance is Michelet's characterization of the movement as the discovery of the world and of man. Both secularism and humanism are the end results of the Renaissance, mirrored forth in the beginning.

Let it be candidly said that all of us are the children of the Renaissance, and that even those of us who criticize, resist, and deplore are still the heirs of the Renaissance.

The movement began as a philosophical and social movement. It was a revolt against the narrowly conceived theological and theocratic program and views of the medieval world. It was a movement for individual liberty. It seized upon the philosophical and artistic values which it found expressed in the literatures of pagan Greece and Rome as its first norm. It strove to achieve human freedom.

It was the belief of the pioneers of the Renaissance that man was created for self-expression. The medieval church had taught man's greatest need as self-denial and self-suppression. Man was created not for the development of his inherent powers, but that he might be trained for heaven.

The Renaissance worked as a leaven with medieval society through the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, sapping the enthusiasm of the institutional church, alienating the rising cities and sometimes the universities and often capturing the clergy itself.

There was an eclipse of Renaissance interests in the sixteenth century. Man turned again to religion as "the chief concern of mortals here below." From that viewpoint the Reformation was a revival of religion.

But the theological arguments were to be settled in the court of force. The religious wars between Catholic and Protestant ended in the Thirty Years War (1618-1648), the most destructive war in the records of the Occident prior to 1914.

But the destruction of the wars of religion brought a great pall of disillusion and bitterness over the spirits of

men. Millions (in both Catholic and Protestant lands) lost faith in religion. Their hope of any kind of a Kingdom of God was lost in the smoke of burning villages, and the sunrise of a new day had seemingly been blotted out in the bloody mists emanating from the murderous hates of the theological camps. Men lost faith in God. If God did exist, he could not be as the churches represented him.

The humanistic interests of an earlier century metamorphosed themselves into the Rationalism of the eighteenth century. The weakened church forces of the eighteenth century were devastated by the philosophical and historical rationalism of the times.

The sturdy thinkers of Rationalism illustrate the truth of the proverb that "the wrestler leans on his opponent." For it was the assumption of all the rationalists that truth exists. They did not recognize that this fundamental assumption was their own inheritance out of the Christian past. Man's mind needed but to be freed from priestly or traditional or institutional tyranny or from local prejudice to discover the truth. A part of the process of discovering truth was in the comparing of minds. But that an objective, discoverable truth existed was never doubted by these thinkers.

But the eighteenth century was followed by the nineteenth. In this century romanticism, positivism and pragmatism followed one another as the ascendant fashions of the thinking of men.

It had never been the intention of the Reformers to undermine the influence of the church. It had been



their dream that a purified, rejuvenated, reformed church would arise. The church was to be a better church than the older hierarchical church had been. It would bring the message of the Kingdom of God much nearer in the midst of men.

But when the two major religious camps joined battle in the strife of the Thirty Years War they were directly preparing for the confusion of the twentieth century.

While there ran side by side with these philosophical antirational systems a revival of faith in the Hebrew-Christian tradition, the church never regained an influence comparable to that which it held prior to the Thirty Years War.

The Thirty Years War was not in its course a religious war. But in its beginnings it was a religious war. It has been said that the war was provoked by the missionaries of the Society of Jesus. That is, of course, but a half-truth. The war could be said with equal truth to be the result of the sincere obstinacy and conviction of the Reformers.

The war was the culminating point of the effort to force Europe back into the medieval theocratic mold. At the Peace of Westphalia the Holy Roman Empire received its death wound. It was there conceded that a civilized people (Switzerland and Holland being in question) could be legally outside the jurisdiction of the Holy Roman Empire. Nationalism was thereby conceded and while the empire lingered on as a ghost until 1806 it was really an anachronism after the Peace of Westphalia.

But the death of the idea of one government for man-

kind dealt what seemed an equally damaging blow to the idea of one church for all the world. Europe could not be brought back under the hierarchy. The Roman church with its theocratic dream was now definitely blocked.

In effect the Roman Catholic body has been a denomination since Westphalia. It may be the largest denomination, but it has been in the position of a denomination in spite of its protestations otherwise.

If nationalism took the place of the one empire uniting mankind politically, what took the place of ecclesiastical unity? The answer is twofold: the national or state-allied churches or the denominations.

The state church is like the hierarchical church in that it is the perpetuation of the geographical basis of Christian organization. The denomination abandons the geographical basis of organization for one which is purely ideological. The bond of brotherhood is like-mindedness.

A number of factors have tended to favor denominational organization. But the basic factor was the growing individualism of the Western world.

Until almost the dawn of the twentieth century there seemed no interruption to the onward march of individualism. But the triumph of a nonrational (or shall we say antirational?) viewpoint in prevalent philosophical thinking has suddenly raised a doubt as to the reality of this entity we have been calling an individual.

At the same time the insights into the depths of personality which the new psychology has brought to twentieth-century man has robbed him of any awe of his own inner experiences. Who can fall down in awe before his

own glands? Who can be sure that his own preferences and biases are not the results of some deviation of his digestive processes?

A former generation listened with awe to the man who announced that the Holy Spirit had spoken to him. The present generation wonders what the associated symptoms are, and what the blood pressure reading might be.

While this has been in progress another development has entered most vitally into recent thinking. The results of the historical approach to the study of the Christian Scriptures have begun to be the widely known possession of Christians.

The result has been the recognition that the very concept of "canon" implies the concept of "community" (church) from which the "canon" grew. The community was prior to the canon. Thus a new respect for the "community" or "fellowship" was inevitable.

Upon this background we can most certainly predict the main trends of Christian interest in our century—barring, of course, cataclysmic happenings which might alter the entire face of society.

As the world entered into its post-Westphalian era, ideological organization did not immediately or entirely replace the older geographically formed church structures. But soon denominations began to thrive. Today their aggregate number is hundreds. There is no exact census of denominations available and there are a number that have disappeared from the field of history.

But as one studies the denominations formed it seems there are only a few significant types. These significant

types have sometimes been subdivided, sometimes by the importation of foreign ideologies into a denominational society; sometimes by unholy ambition or limited vision of the preachers; sometimes by migration or isolation of parts of a brotherhood from their colleagues; or sometimes by some failure to re-adapt with the passing of time and changed conditions.

One can say there have been only five significant movements expressed through denominational or party cleavages since Westphalia. These are the only five that have attained any large numerical following.

These are Quakerism, Methodism, Pietism, an Anglo-American Chiliastic movement (known in the U. S. as Adventism, and in England as Plymouth Brethrenism), and the movement which, rising in the early nineteenth century as the Oxford Movement, in the twentieth century has come to be called the Ecumenical Movement.

Quakerism, Methodism, and Pietism are each distinct movements. But at the same time it may be said there is a very real unity among these three movements. The three great movements are individualistic and put the individual distinctly in the center of God's dealings with men. Hence all three of these movements emphasize Christianity as an inner transforming experience and while they speak different dialects all agree that Christianity is an ethical life and all look for an authentic voice of God from within the conscience or spirit of the individual.

The clamors and recurrent crises of the modern period, as it swept away historic modes and landmarks, was favor-



able to a large-scale re-emergence of the chiliastic or millennialist emphasis.

Re-enforced by Scripture texts (for there are passages and whole books of the Old Testament canon and the New Testament canon which are expressive of the apocalypticism of their respective writers) spokesmen appeared to warn the world of approaching doom. The heavens were to be rolled up as a scroll and the planet itself was to shrivel before the all-consuming (or some said rather it was purifying) fire of the consummation of God's wrath. After that the Kingdom would be disclosed in all its pristine purity and wondrous glory.

As the nineteenth century dawned and as it proceeded, various teachers of this viewpoint arose. The disillusion with the historical institutional church and also criticism of the new subjectivist types of Christian experience prepared for a renewed chiliastic emphasis.

Of the teachers who arose, two gained a world-wide hearing. The names of George Miller in America and John Nelson Darby in England are blazoned across the sky of the nineteenth century. A "plan of salvation" was constructed by a wholly uncritical application of the Biblical writings. The unsystematized hopes and unrelated insights of "holy men of old" were woven into a "prophetic" timetable of the ages and an authoritative norm for mankind.

Impelled by the awesome conviction that God has spoken, both Miller and Darby became forces with which to reckon. There is yet no connection proved between the English and the American movement. They differ

in detail of plan and Scriptural exegesis. They differ in temper.

The Millerite (Adventist) movement has been practical, missionary-motivated, mildly oriented toward the church and somewhat sharing in the humanitarian interests of its founder's age. The Plymouth Brethren movement, or Darbyism (all designations are repudiated save purely Scriptural designations), has as its background Calvinistic metaphysics, a definite anti-institutionalism and the most exaggerated views of inspiration of Scripture. The *church* has apostasized and so the Plymouth Brethren program has been one of infiltration of religious organizations and the gathering of the regenerated into little circles for prayer, fellowship, and breaking of bread whenever feasible.

As the impersonal character of urban life and the vastness of the modern world sink into the soul of man, there has been a tendency to try to guarantee the individual by asserting the supremacy of the scheme allegedly drawn from the infallible Book. For chiliasm is paradoxical in that it is highly individualistic and yet seeks a settled authoritarian norm. Such norm or standard is found in God's immutable plan of the ages which is found in the Bible, and is independent of any response of man. Need it be added that we here designate the two great chiliastic teachers of the modern period and that minor teachers (who are numerous and sometimes somewhat startling) are but imitators or disciples.

Even as the nineteenth century produced a movement which may be regarded as a reaction against the individu-

alistic, ethical, subjectivist Christianity of the post-Westphalian period, it produced another movement which is a return to the pre-Westphalian, even pre-Reformation, era.

For contemporary with Darby (1800-1882) and Miller (1782-1849) lived John Henry Newman (1801-1890). This champion of the church as a historic institution summed up within himself the conservative tendencies of his age. But it was a literate conservatism which viewed tradition in no narrow or provincial sense.

Newman was an undoubted genius, but that the world was ready for such a movement is shown by the fact that his actual defection from the Church of England and admission to the Roman hierarchical fold scarcely caused a tremor in the mounting Anglo-Catholic revival.

The new respect for the institution was felt in every direction. One fruitful aspect has been the present-day revival of worship. Starting in the revived Anglican circles, under the spell of Oxford Movement ideas, it has spread to the perimeter of Christendom. Few indeed are the circles which have not felt the influence of a movement which brought statelier, more elaborate, more artistic and more formal usages in worship and in church furnishings and architecture.

Whatever else is implied, this movement is away from the excessive rational emphasis of the eighteenth century and so is consciously or unconsciously (and this writer suspects it is most often unconsciously) in the direction of a greater emphasis upon the church as an institution. It is an institution which ministers to the entire

man and does not alone appeal to his reason and await his verdict for truth and right.

As the nineteenth century has merged into the twentieth the emphasis upon the anti-intellectual character of man has increased. The confident assumptions of the eighteenth century are vanishing. Man lives by his unconscious, not by his reason.

The actual events of the past few decades are easily construed to support either of two viewpoints. The most extreme apocalypticist may cite them as being the confirmation of his visions. Or, on the other hand, the institutionalist may point and say, "See, individualism is but quicksand; only as we recognize the collective character of man's life have we any hope of the Kingdom."

This accounts for the present seeming well-nigh irresistible sweep of the ecumenical church movement. For the present movement toward a World Council of Churches is an extension of the new respect for the church as an institution, the arrival of which Newman signalized.

An assembly of Anglican bishops meeting in Chicago in 1888 issued the famous *Chicago Quadrilateral*. Subsequently ratified by the Lambeth gathering of Anglican bishops of the world, the "quadrilateral" was an invitation to Christendom to unite on the basis of the four fundamentals.

The four historic fundamentals are: (1) the historic ministry (deacons, presbyters, bishops with apostolic succession); (2) the historic Scriptures (Old and New Testaments); (3) the historic sacraments; and (4) the historic creeds.



Anglicans and those who share their viewpoint have been the motive power of the movement which has issued in the forming World Council of Churches of the present. But the times were ripe for such a movement else there would not have been the response which has made the years since 1937 among the most astonishing in Christian history.

Yet why? The actual achievements of the ecumenical movement have been small. The actual and potential confusion in ecumenical ranks is great. No major ideological emphasis within Christendom has been repudiated or corrected. Just at present "co-operation" is being confused with "union," in spite of earlier disclaimers of any such association of the differing ideas. No theological thinking has been altered. Men of quite differing theologies speak as interpreters for the ecumenical movement.

How shall we reconcile the state church with the more individualistic denominations? What shall be the issue? Shall we have a great democratic "league of churches" with a council which shall serve as an organ of conscience for the Christian world? Or will there emerge a representative "democratic" bureaucracy? If the latter should emerge, how would the world organization escape being in fact a twin sister of the Papacy? What would be the working relationship of a functioning World Council organization to the Church of Rome? Will the chasm between Protestantism and Eastern orthodoxy be permanently bridged?

*Our little systems have their day,  
They have their day and cease to be,  
They are but broken lights of Thee,  
And Thou, O Lord, are more than they.*

—Alfred Tennyson

One is humbled as he surveys the Christian centuries and beholds the vastness of the Body of Christ. It is vaster even than plans of imperial Pope or suave persuasive "Christian statesmen" with their mixture of sociological-religious hypotheses.

Of the great emphases which run through the centuries of church history, is it too much to say that they are the tongues of the Spirit of God? One thing seems certain. Christian development is destined to undergo notable and maybe startling and even revolutionary deflections and gyrations within the twentieth century. May the church say,

*In some time, His good time, I shall arrive;  
He guides me and the bird.  
In His good time.*

—Robert Browning

In the meantime, there is a prayer appropriate to the times — "Thy Kingdom come."



